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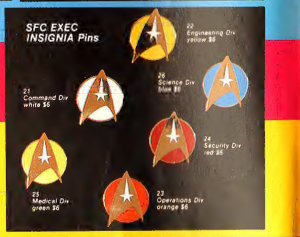
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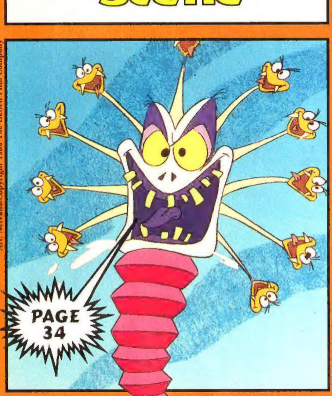

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WORD BALLOONS

The guy just a few doors down the hall used to date Vampirella. And he has the neck wounds to prove it.

You remember Vampirella, don't you? She was the scantily-clad, vampiric, Barbarella-clone who cavorted through her own black & white horror comics from Warren Publications in the '70s. And the guy down the hall is W.R. Mohalley, STARLOG PRESS Creative Director.

Amidst the graphic horrors explored this issue, Bill Mohalley and I sat down to chat about his decade (1972-83) working at Warren. We wanted to set some ugly rumors to rest. First off, Vampirella.

"We were all really excited," Bill recalls, "about the *Vampirella* movie with Michael Carreras [of Hammer Films, producing]. We wanted Barbara Eden—she would have been the *perfect* Vampirella. We had a Vampirella. She came up to the office, hung around—but the movie never got made."

Bill himself started working for Warren in 1972. A graduate of New York's School of Visual Arts, he hoped to become an Art Director on Madison Avenue. "I was sitting in the SVA employment office," he says, "looking for a job. [Then-Editor] Bill Dubay called. He wanted a bustidious girl to work in Warren's art department. There weren't any. But Dubay was desperate, so *I* went over. The first day I cut up $70 worth of type, but he kept me on."

During Bill's days, Warren published *Vampirella* as well as her two older compatriots *Creepy* and *Eerie*, later additions *The Rook* and *1984* (retitled *1994* when the George Orwell Estate protested), and of course, the sire of *all* genre movie magazines, *Famous Monsters of Filmland*. "I was buying *Famous Monsters* when I was seven in 1959," Bill notes. "I didn't *read* it. I just looked at the pictures."

While at Warren, Bill Mohalley did (or supervised) all sorts of art department/production tasks—the lettering and ballooning of comic stories, art corrections, panel bordering (comic-book artists "mostly can't draw straight lines"), printing problems, etc. He designed the covers and for most of that decade, laid out and designed *every* issue of *Famous Monsters*. He worked with *FM*'s legendary editor Forrest J Ackerman and *FM* staffers Tim Moriarty, Randy Palmer and Jeff Rovin as well as *Creepy/Eerie/Vampi* editors Dubay, Archie Goodwin, Louise Jones and Marv Wolfman.

"It was pretty much a fun place to work," Bill says. "It was a party every day until we decided to work. We had a target on the wall and we would throw glop at it to see who bought lunch. Jim Warren ended up buying lunch a few times. We had wine and cheese parties for the art department every Friday. We played cards and *Name That Tune* on the radio."

In general, magazine publishing isn't always so leisurely. "But we worked," Bill notes, "when we had to, sometimes all day and night. And Jim Warren was an *interesting* publisher. He based himself on Hugh Hefner; he wanted a magazine with the visibility of *Playboy*. Warren knew how to throw parties and he had a dry sense of humor. Once he discovered that a candy store near where he lived didn't carry Warren magazines, so he rented a *tank* and parked it in front of the store.

"FANGORIA helped kill *Famous Monsters*. *FM*'s readers were young. Eventually, they didn't know who Bela Lugosi and Lon Chaney were. *FM* was great on movies of the '40s but not on today's. And color. COMICS SCENE readers should *really* appreciate the color pages in this magazine. In 25 years of *Famous Monsters* (1958-83), we published only *16 pages* of color. There's more than that in a *single* issue of COMICS SCENE."

Wouldn't it be fun for you if STARLOG did a *Creepy*-style magazine?

"I would know *how* to do it," he sighs, "all the shortcuts. But you're talking about 50 pages of artwork for each magazine. That's a lot of work.

"*Creepy, Eerie, Vampirella, Famous Monsters*—they had their time," Bill Mohalley says. "I don't think there's a place for them anymore."

—David McDonnell/Editor

COMICS SCENE RETURNS just before Christmas with lotsa presents. First off, there's that long-delayed chat with **Kirk Alyn**, the **Superman** and **Blackhawk** of the serials...an in-depth visit to the Okefenokee Swamp for the lowdown on the new **Pogo**...and fascinating talk with **George Perez** & **Bill Sienkiewicz** in **COMICS SCENE #11, on sale December 12, 1989.**

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LETTERING

WANTED? MORE COMICS CHARACTERS like Ed McMahon and stand-up comic/super-villain Solomon Grundy (Mickey Morton). They're on hand for *The Roast on Legends of the Superheroes*, one of two 1978 TV specials (the other was *The Challenge of the Superheroes*).

Roast Photo: NBC

...I read in your last issue that the *Superman* cartoon series had been cancelled. That's really too bad. *Superman* wasn't perfect, but it was nice to have a superhero show on Saturday morning again.

Besides, it's much better than the horrible *Superboy* TV series. The old Superboy comics are some of my all-time favorites. When I heard of the Superboy show, I was ecstatic. I figured even if the show failed, at least DC would bring Superboy back. No such luck. The obvious problem with the show is that it follows no continuity whatsoever. According to this series (which takes place in the present?), Clark Kent first started acting as Superboy during his college years, which means he was *never* the boy protector of Smallville. Jonathan Kent is also alive which means the show isn't even following the movie continuity. This might be nitpicking, but the show doesn't have the innocence or the *spirit* of the comics. All the episodes I've seen are about crooked cops, terrorists and Lana Lang being tortured. Nope, all this TV series shares with the Superboy I know is the name.

On a lighter note, I was intrigued by the picture of the Huntress on the letters page. I vaguely remember watching that *Challenge of the Superheroes* movie as a kid. I don't remember the Huntress but I'm pretty sure the Flash and Black Canary were in it as well as, of course, Adam West and Burt Ward as Batman and Robin. Does anyone know where I could get a videotape of that TV special or the old *Super-Friends* cartoons for that matter?

Erik Cushman
15 Hope Street
Hopedale, MA 01747

...I just bought COMICS SCENE #8. As always, I was delighted by the various news and articles. However, what really prompted me to write this letter was the photo of Barbara Joyce as the Huntress. I thought I was *the* only one who knew there was anything on TV called *Challenge of the Superheroes*.

My memories of *Challenge of the Superheroes* are limited since I was only 12 at the time. I do recall live versions of the Flash, Hawkman, Solomon Grundy, Batman and Robin. If I remember correctly, there was also an old superhero by the name of "Retired Man."

It has been too long since the show has been on TV. Although it was played for laughs, I did like the costumes. Hawkman's wings looked real, and the Flash ran at full speed. I would love to know more about the cast and the other characters. I do know that Adam West and Burt Ward played Batman and Robin. Thanks to you, I now know that Barbara Joyce played the Huntress.

Is there any way for COMICS SCENE to run an article on *Challenge of the Superheroes* in the near future?

James Dinsmore
310 N.Iuka
Pratt, KS 67124

If the readers demand it, anything is possible. By the way, character actor William Schallert (STARLOG #85) played "Retired Man."

...I've always liked the comic and I didn't mind the TV series, despite the camp and really bad jokes, but I have just seen the new *Batman* film and I love it!! It comes closer to the character I've always felt Bruce Wayne/Batman would've been like were he a real person. For God's sake, leave poor Michael Keaton alone!!! He has got enough to worry about in his personal life without having to hear people gripe about *Batman*! You so-called Batman followers—whatever happened to being open-minded and not judging an actor before seeing how he does?! I also want to say that I thought this version of *Batman* was the best yet! Keaton did a wonderful job of portraying the man—the real man behind the mask, and like one thug (in the film) said, "Hey! He's *human* after all!"

I've always gotten the impression from the comics that Bruce Wayne/Batman was a loner and because of his personal tragedy and pain (both physical and psychological), he felt he had to do something to deal with the crime in his hometown. What's wrong with that? He never kills anyone (not outright) and he always brought the crooks to the authorities if he could. In fact, he believed in "bringing 'em back alive." If a crook died, it was through his own fault or he chose death, rather than go to prison or be caught.

"LMG"
Mira Loma, CA

...I picked up COMICS SCENE #8 yesterday and I decided to write to you. I had my doubts about Michael Keaton because of previous films but 15 minutes into this movie, I knew that he was Batman! My compliments on the Batmobile and the batsuit, they were both great. As for the Joker, no one else could have done better than Jack Nicholson. I know it's very early, but as for a sequel, who would make a better Penguin than Danny DeVito?

Andrew Starfield
626 36th Avenue SE
Albany, NY 97321

Well, Bob Hoskins, Burgess Meredith, John Lithgow, John Cleese, John Candy, Rick Moranis, Patrick McGoohan, Patrick Macnee, Michael Caine, Donald Pleasence, or...

...After all the hype...was *Batman* worth it? NO!!!!

OK. We can accept a blond Vicki Vale. We can accept the Joker having a real name. We can accept young Jack (Joker) Napier, instead of Joe Chill, killing Bruce Wayne's parents. We can even accept an unknown actor for young Jack Nicholson who looked more like young Michael Keaton. Even the last 15 minutes where the film degenerates into comedy whether intentional or not is acceptable. (Batwing shot down by handgun, domino toppling church pews, etc.)

What is totally unacceptable is Michael (short, no muscles, undynamic voice) Keaton as Batman. Even with the muscles built into the suit, Keaton is still not at all believable as Batman. With Keaton's round baby face cheeks and fish lips glaring out from under

the cowl, he looks more like a merman or a fishman than a Batman. Where is the firm jaw and the grim determination? Where is the tall, steely eyed, husky-voiced crimefighter who is at his physical and mental peak? Certainly not here.

What is even beyond totally unacceptable is Michael (no shoulders, short, sparse hair) Keaton as Bruce Wayne. Bruce should look like what James Bond does in his tux...tall, handsome and imposing. Instead, we have short, slight, ordinary and confused. Part of the deception of the superhero's secret identity (the way Superman slouches as newspaperman Clark Kent)? No' unfortunately, it's part of the deception of the director as God. Warners should be flogged for allowing Tim Burton such total control.

Keaton as the Riddler—great. Keaton as Robin—maybe if desperate. Keaton as Batman/Bruce Wayne—never again please!!!

Paul Knowlton
Fort Drum, NY

...OK, so it took me two screenings of *Batman* to make up my mind, but the votes are in and this comic-book collector of 20 years is hooked! The dark tones and sadistic humor seduced me into the world of this new Batman. I know I won't be alone in predicting a sequel. I only hope the film's writers take advantage of the perfect set-up of the Batman's second-most insane foe: Two-Face! Billy Dee Williams may not be my favorite choice to play the split-personality of the twisted Two-Face, but the prospect and possibilities of this villain are staggering! Three suggestions to the sequel's creators: 1) Replace Commissioner Gordon with someone who actually *looks* the part 2) Lose Prince as pop-music writer and 3) Cool it with the guns (Batman has proven over and over he doesn't need to kill to fight crime!). Well, until a vial of acid is tossed on Harvey Dent...we've always got *Punisher!*

Allan Townsend
904 N. Sheridan Apt. B
Tacoma, WA 98403

...I'm writing this letter because I don't know who else to say this to, so here it goes. I'm so outraged as to the use of Prince's music in *Batman*. This "music" just does *not* fit in with the movie's grim tone. Danny Elfman's music, however, does fit in and is the music I actually remembered after the picture was over. I don't know why Warner Bros. let Prince make a whole album called the "soundtrack" when Elfman had 70 minutes of his music in the film and Prince only had about six. So, I'm just saying that the next *Batman* movie doesn't need funk or whatever kind of crap Prince makes. It deserves adventurous and good music like Danny Elfman's.

Jim Matthews
13967 Seminole
Redford, MI 48230

For more on Danny Elfman's score, see the interview with Elfman in STARLOG #147.

...Pierce Brosnan as Batman—maybe. Mel Gibson as Batman—I can see it. Sam (*The Spirit*, *Flash Gordon*) Jones as Batman—good. Dolph Lundgren (with a dubbed-in voice) as Batman—fine. Christopher Reeve as Batman—a sure thing. Even Robert Urich as Batman—OK. Even aging Burt Reynolds as Batman—acceptable. Michael Keaton as Batman—OK if he doesn't appear as Bruce Wayne.

Maybe if Keaton had stayed in the Batman costume with its built-in physique all the time, the film would have been OK. But when we have to see him as a short, slight, shoulderless Bruce Wayne and then try to reaccept him as Batman, it just falls apart. The film would have been fine even with the overreliance on comedy if we could have had a hunky Bruce Wayne.

Jack Nicholson's Joker was great, but he could have pushed it further. He could have been much more demonic and frightening. But, he was brilliant as we knew he would be.

The music was great. I'm referring to Danny Elfman's moody score, not to Prince's generic James Brown-type funk that all sounded the same and added nothing to the film.

The sets, props and FX were all fine. It could have been truly Batman if only Keaton had been cast as Bob the Goon, Alexander Knox or even Alfred—anyone except Bruce Wayne.

Linda Nelson
Chatfield, MN

...I saw *Batman* and thought it was great. The art direction and the special effects were spectacular.

I have some ideas for the sequels. First, have a few more characters. Robin would definitely have to be in this one. Also, a new villain. How about Catwoman, Riddler, Ra's al Ghul or the Puzzler? They could also have Police Chief O'Hara. And if there's a *Batman III*, they could have Batgirl and another new villain, possibly Man-Bat or the Spook. Also, give Batman more vehicles, like a new Batcopter, Batcycle and a Batboat. Plus, either bring back Vicki Vale or give Bruce Wayne a new love interest for each film. Also, the producers could have Batman fight crime at places outside of Gotham City.

Scott Fanta
Cicero, IL

...We have seen many letters dealing with *Batman* in recent months, and many more dealing with the character alone. After seeing the film, as a comic-book fan, I can only say that it was masterful. After countless adaptations of comic heroes over the decades, *finally* someone has done it right.

Now I realize that many aficionados of the '60s TV show will be irked at this letter, but so be it. To even compare the then and now is pathetic. It's the old case of trying to compare apples with oranges. *Batman* the TV show was a reflection of its pop-culture environment. On its own, the show served its purpose in its time. It entertained.

Unfortunately, it also served to seriously damage the legend of the Batman. Batman set out 50 years ago to strike fear into the criminal element. Adam West only generated chuckles and guffaws, not fear. As a child, I enjoyed the show. Some 20 years later, I recognize it for the unbelievable silly vehicle it was. Don't get me wrong, as a comedy, it's great. But, for your readers to call West and Burt Ward "brilliant actors"? Yeah, and maybe we'll see Adam West and Dustin Hoffman in *Rain Man II* this year.

I am a Wisconsinite, and recently Adam West blew into Milwaukee. A misguided radio station decided they wanted to interview him and called him "the original Batman" (sorry guys, two *Batman* serials were done in the '40s). As I have heard on so many interviews before, West whined about his fate, but it didn't stop him from acting as Grand Marshal of the Milwaukee City of Festivals Parade. He even did a radio commercial where he said, "Hello citizens, this is Batman..." So, I guess it's OK for this "brilliant" actor to slander the new film, but capitalize on it at the same time. How may paid performances will West land this year because of someone else's work? West may be an actor. Maybe better than some, but I have only seen him in B-pictures. In the context of the TV show alone (as an action-comedy), West did the series well. But, to face facts, he is not intimidating, frightening or tough, and never was.

Tracy C. Lesch
561 Elmhurst Avenue Apt. 2
Delavan, WI 53115

GIMME ALL YER MONEY, YA SAP!
BATMAN AND ROBIN © DC COMICS
AFTER BEING VOTED OUT OF THE BATMAN COMIC AND NOT BEING WRITTEN INTO THE BATMAN MOVIE, A DISGRUNTLED BOY WONDER TURNS TO A LIFE OF CRIME.
Art: Mike Fisher

A UNIVERSE OF WONDER AND THRILLS!

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By MICHAEL McAVENNIE

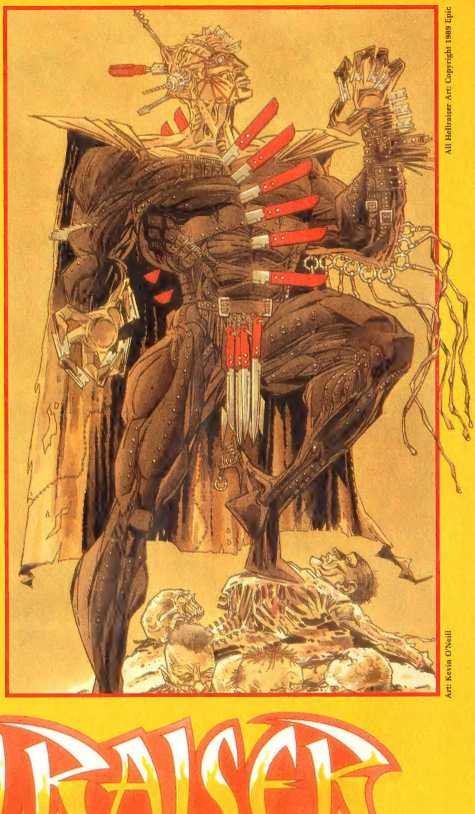
Raising HELLRAISER

Other hands have solved the puzzle of how to unleash Clive Barker's fearful Cenobites.

You *don't* have to be a fan of the movies to like the book," editor Dan Chichester promises in regard to Epic Comics' new quarterly bookshelf series *Hellraiser*, based on Clive Barker's story "The Hellbound Heart" and two film spin-offs. "The appeal of this comics anthology stems from the fact that the stories maintain the same flavor and tone that Barker's own material has, with many disturbing, evocative elements and a strong visceral imagery in them," Chichester explains. "We're tapping into what makes his work so appealing. Those are our basic guidelines for what kind of stories *we* want to tell."

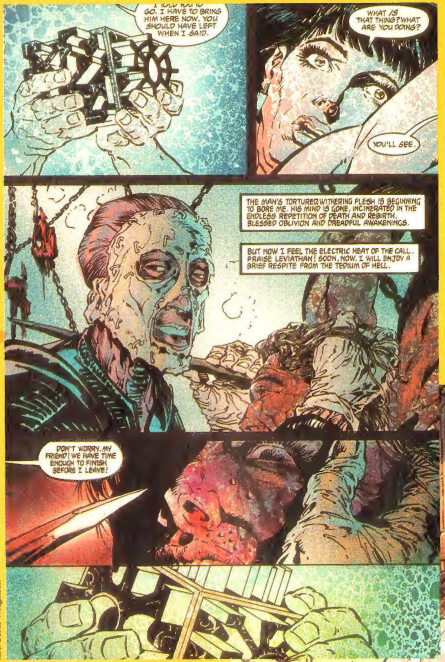
According to Chichester, whose other credits include editing *Marshall Law* and the upcoming *Nightbreed* series (based on another Barker story), each 64-page issue of *Hellraiser* features four tales spun by various creators. "All of the stories take place within the *Hellraiser* universe," he says. "This fits within a framework that (former Epic head) Archie Goodwin, Clive and I have worked out, which gives writers and artists concepts and ideas they can work with to create stories that—although not interconnected *per se*—are all taking place in the same world. If, at some point down the line, one writer or artist really likes another guy's character, he could pick that character and do his own story.

"The common theme throughout each issue," Chichester continues, "is that you'll be progressively learning more about the *Hellraiser* universe. The stories in the first issue will drop certain hints about the way Hell works. You get a few more details in #2, and by the fourth or fifth issue, you'll have a much better understand-



All Hellraiser Art: Copyright 1989 Epic

Art: Kevin O'Neill


I SAW YOU'VE GOT 3 MEN TO BRING HIM HERE NOW. YOU SHOULD HAVE LEFT WHEN I SAID.
WHAT IS THAT THING? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
YOU'LL SEE.
THE MAN'S TORTURED WITHERING FLESH IS BEGINNING TO BORE ME. HIS MIND IS LONG INCINERATED IN THE ENDLESS REPETITION OF DEATH AND REBIRTH. BLESSED OBLIVION AND DREADFUL AWAKENINGS.
BUT NOW I FEEL THE ELECTRIC HEART OF THE CALL. PRAISE LEVIATHAN! SOON, NOW, I WILL ENJOY A BRIEF RESPITE FROM THE TEDIUM OF HELL.
DON'T WORRY, MY FRIEND! WE HAVE TIME ENOUGH TO FINISH BEFORE I LEAVE!

Art: Bernt Wrightson

"Face is a completely skinless Cenobite who staples a human face and hands over his fleshy, pulpy mess," explains writer Jan Strnad.

obsessed with the use of the language who, by solving a crossword puzzle, opens various doorways to Hell; *Hellraiser II: Hellbound* scriptwriter Peter Atkins' "Songs of Metal and Flesh," in which a music student finds a certain structure in his music that coincides with the order of Hell itself; and Scott (*Pigeons from Hell*) Hampton's "The Threshold," where a computer designer taps into the power of Hell through his computer. Altogether, that's a lot of Hell.

"We've even got a couple of stories planned concerning Phillip LaMarchand, the guy who created the puzzle boxes," Chichester adds. "Not as a character necessarily, but more as a designer or architect. We'll see some repercussions of his creations."

While some of the familiar Cenobites won't always appear, the film's imagery will resurface.

Art: Tod McKeever

ing of Hell than you did at the beginning. Subplots will begin to develop throughout the book, but they won't be as pre-determined or thoroughly planned out like they are in regular comics. You'll definitely get a sense, however, that you're getting more into this universe as time goes on."

What will also be explained is the idea of different puzzles providing different entrances into Hell. Chichester cautions that it doesn't have to be one of the boxes used in the movies; it could be *any* kind of puzzle. "It's the *obsessional* attitude behind solving the puzzle which acts as a key that opens the doors to Hell, not just the puzzles themselves," he says. Some of the stories he cites as examples include: "Wordsworth," Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean's tale about a man

And what of Pinhead and the other Cenobites who have appeared in the movies? Will *Hellraiser* readers develop a better understanding of them? Some, like Nicolas Vince (who played the films' Chatterer Cenobite), Bill Mumy and Miguel Ferrer, have used the popular characters to various degrees. According to the editor, however, those Cenobites won't necessarily play as involved a role in the comic as they did in the films. "They're in there," Chichester says, "and they are there for the writers or artists to use, *if* they want to. Part of the obvious appeal with *Hellraiser*, however, is to have fun and create your own characters. I'll probably be commissioning a story or two that I definitely want them in, just to keep an attachment to the films. If the book succeeds, though, we would really like to just use the films as a springboard and tell our own stories.

"The Hell we've fleshed out in the *Hellraiser* 'bible,' " he laughs, "—although that may not be the right term to use, considering the name of the book—defines Hell in a very broad spectrum. There's a very definite purpose to it. As such, in that purpose, the Cenobites are the 'shock troops' or 'S.S. of the Damned,' so it makes sense to see *many* of these 'soldiers' going on their missions."

Among the several new Cenobites introduced in *Hellraiser*'s first issue is Face, who appears in "The Warm Red," a story written by Jan Strnad and drawn by Berni Wrightson and Bill Wray.

"Face is a completely skinless Cenobite who staples a human face and hands over his fleshy, pulpy mess," says Strnad, whose credits include *Sword of the Atom* for DC Comics and Epic's upcoming new series *Stalkers*, which he'll co-write with Mark Verheiden (CS#8). "The first story Face appears in, 'The Warm Red,' is exactly what you might think it is: a torture and blood story. He'll then reappear in another issue in a story called 'The Crystal Precipice,' which takes place on another planet in the far future. Some people discover this planet, which is completely without any life, and pay the price for their discovery as they realize they aren't wanted there.

"I originally planned to write only two stories about Face," Strnad adds. "but Dan and I grew fond of the character, so I've also written an origin story called 'To Prepare a Face,' in which we'll learn what Face did as a human to deserve being turned into a Cenobite. Pinhead will also appear in the origin, but I've otherwise stayed away from the movies' Cenobites. I always worry about handling somebody else's character and wonder if I'm doing something that might conflict with someone else's plans for that character. I thought it was safer, and more interesting to me as a writer, to create a new Cenobite."

Ted McKeever

Some Cenobites are wild & crazy guys.

Writer/illustrator Ted McKeever, known for his work on Mad Dog Graphics' *Eddie Current* and Epic's new *Plastic Forks* title, agrees. He therefore came up with Mr. Soul for "The Dance of the Fetus," which also appears in *Hellraiser* #1. "The Cenobites who appeared in the films are ones that inflict pain on people," McKeever explains. "Mr. Soul *inserts* himself into people, pulls the right strings and causes them to commit suicide. He's the extra push for people who have the desire but not the will to actually kill themselves. He lets them do the real dirty work.

"You hear a lot about suicides in the media," he continues, "I really felt it would be interesting to create someone who was the *cause* for a person to do something like that. You'll see in most *Hellraiser* stories that it's the Cenobite who hurts people, so I created an almost-human Cenobite who wants to have the situation as much out of his hands as possible, which gives him more of a conscience as well as compassion."

According to McKeever, "The Dance of the Fetus' not only introduces the Mr. Soul character to the growing ranks of the Cenobites, but also marks the beginning of his acquaintance with a strange traveling companion named Simply Fetus. "In

Marvel will continue tapping the vein with Clive Barker's *Nightbreed*.

Nightbreed Art: Jim Baikie/Copyright 1989 Epic

the story," he says, "Mr. Soul approaches a woman who is contemplating suicide. When he jumps inside her to do the deed, however, he discovers that she is pregnant and that a fetus is involved. It's now a triangle in which he's trying to help her commit suicide but cannot help her take another life who has no choice in the matter. It's a balance between complete innocence, which is the fetus, and complete corruption, which is the Cenobite." McKeever adds that the "fetal attraction" between Mr. Soul and Simply Fetus will be further explored in an upcoming tale.

Other Cenobites are also at work throughout the [illegible] of Pain' [in issue [illegible]] writers Eric Saltzgaber and John [illegible] Bolton introduces a Cenobite from the early 1500s called Grisly Art, a horrible, multi-breasted thing with hooks in its lower lip. Then we have another Saltzgaber piece called 'A Walk on the Wild Side,' which focuses on a renegade Cenobite named Atkins. Normally, the way things work is that if someone escapes from Hell, the Cenobites go after him, send him back and deal with him from there. Atkins, however, thinks that system sucks and says, 'If they leave, they die.' There's no bargaining with him. He just blasts from the ranks and acts like a 'Rambo Cenobite'.

"Steve Bissette and Rick Veitch are also working on a story which features a Cenobite called Cronos. What makes him different from the rest is that he [illegible]. There's one on the inside which gives people to serve, and a corresponding puzzle on the inside, in which he gets off on the pain if people move the pieces around."

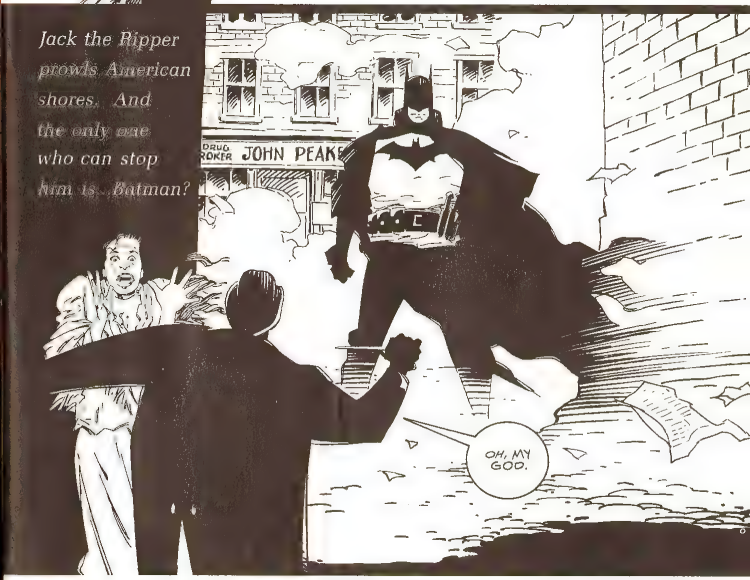
Other top-notch tales will be seen in upcoming issues of *Hellraiser*, the editor notes. Marcus McClure and Jorge Zaffino will unlock "The Vault," where the warden of a South American prison uses to explain the escape of several convicts with his only clue being a puzzle box. "Glitter and Go," by Ron Wolfe and Dan Spiegle, takes place in the late 1890s, a time when mass suicides suddenly begin to occur all around the world. No one can explain why people are suddenly casting off personal belongings before jumping off rooftops or the fact that some of them never make it to the bottom. Longtime FANGORIA correspondent Phil Nutman (who covered the *Continued on page 60*

Art: Scott Hampton

The Dark Night of Saucy Jack

By DANIEL DICKHOLTZ

Jack the Ripper prowls American shores. And the only one who can stop him is...Batman?



With each encroaching evening, another woman is found dead in a Gotham City alley, her skin torn open, her organs strewn about her mangled carcass. The fiend responsible has apparently left arcane clues aplenty behind him, but these, like his foul acts, only continue to baffle the metropolis' overworked constabulary. The most prudent thing for them to do obviously would be to rely on the aid of crime's nocturnal nemesis—but not in this day, not in this age. For this is an era when the first traces of smog are only beginning to blacken the air, when the clatter of horsedrawn cabs and not the droning whirr of automobile engines fills the roadways, and when a dark knight, one less familiar upon second glance, must prowl *Gotham by Gaslight*.

Says Brian Augustyn, author of this 48-page Prestige Format project, "With no apologies or real explanation, we essentially pick up the story of Batman as if he had his origin in the late 1800s rather than the late 1900s, with the differences being whatever the technological or sociological differences were at the time. And since the timing worked out so close to perfect, it only made sense that if Jack the Ripper were on the run from London, he might well have turned up in America and therefore Gotham City.

"Interestingly enough, other than not having the hi-tech of a Batmobile

All Gotham by Gaslight Art Trademark & Copyright 1998 DC Comics Inc.

Promises Brian Augustyn, there'll be "a flurry of Bat-action as Batman and Jack the Ripper face off."

or a Batplane, the character works *perfectly* in a Gothic age. In fact, the oath about striking fear into the hearts of cowardly criminals makes even more sense then because it was a more superstitious period. It's an age where things like penny dreadfuls and the Gothic novels like *Varney the Vampire* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* made people fearful of the possibility of night creatures. And certainly with a killer like Jack the Ripper running around loose in reality, it's another thing where there would be a definite fear of the night, making it a perfect place for Batman to operate."

Before Augustyn could put his Victorian-era Bruce Wayne on the trail of one of history's most notorious murderers, the scribe found himself trying to solve a mystery of his own, namely what to feature in a special issue of *Secret Origins*. Series editor Mark Waid had called Augustyn in to investigate "the possibility of doing altered origins of DC characters.

"This struck him as being a great idea and so therefore he was immediately suspect of this,' Augustyn explains. "When he got home, he gave me a call and said, 'Tell me I'm crazy. This sounds like a great idea, but I must be missing something. Am I right?' And I said, 'No, it's actually a good idea.' We then talked some more about what that should be, should it be Superman in Russia, should it be Green Lantern in the Old West, and finally I said, 'Well, wait a minute. What if we don't try to be so extravagant? What if we just say that Batman's origin took place 100 years ago on the gaslit streets of Gotham and go from there?' There was a pause on the line, and then there was a building sigh from Mark and he said, 'Yeah! Yeah, that'll be good!' The next morning, I walked in and said, 'OK, I have the whole story. See, he meets Jack the Ripper...'

"Somehow, it caught many other people's enthusiasm and became a Prestige project, which took us completely by storm, and we realized that we wanted to get somebody good. Mike Mignola walked into the office to drop something off, and we grabbed him and said, 'Here, let's tell you about this project we have in mind. He said, 'Well, I'm too busy to do anything, so don't even bother.' We said, 'Just listen,' and he said, 'No I'm too busy.' So, we sat him down and fed him the whole story, and about three quarters of the way through, he's saying, 'And then he does this, right?' By the end, he was telling us when he would start drawing and how he expected to see the package. In fact, he was even describing to us what the cover would look like! Shortly thereafter at the Chicago Comics Con, he enlisted P. Craig Russell to ink, and I can't say too often that a novice writer such as myself is more than extremely lucky to be blessed with such great artwork. John Workman lettered it. Dave Hornung is painting all the colors, and Mike is working very closely with him to make sure it's very atmospheric and very moody."

It is precisely that unnerving ambience that the writer feels will allow readers more accustomed to seeing the hero function in a harsh, modern milieu to accept him darting across such an antiquated skyline. "There is, rather there *can be* a timelessness about the character. I think Batman works best in a dark, Gothic setting, and if you take him directly through a more Gothic period, it's a natural. It surprises me that someone else hadn't had this idea. At the same time, however, since it's not something that has been done, there's a great deal of curiosity about exactly what that will mean, what changes that will bring.'

As Augustyn has already noted, this caped crusader is denied access to "some of the more elaborate gizmos" his current-day counterpart

employs. Still, even in a less scientifically advanced era, the Batman is hardly without his resources.

'We tried to decide what sort of low-tech gimmicks he could have that would make sense within the period. So, in terms of his utility belt, he has things like grappling hooks and ropes, but certainly not wire-thin guns or anything like that. The only new things I came up with were these small, martial arts-type dagger-darts, big enough to hurt and to pin sleeves to the wall. Otherwise, he's a seriously low-tech guy. The one time that he does motivate around town, it's on the back of a fierce-looking horse, and in the hands of Mignola and Craig Russell, that's a fearsome sight."

Likewise, lacking any bulletproof Kevlar to slip under his tunic or any synthetic fabric to sew a sinister mask or billowing cape from, this 19th century sentinel's menacing garb is consequently "pretty baroque." Details Augustyn, "He essentially wears a fencer's vest, which is a stiffer kind of vest, with the bat-symbol on it, over grey tights, and his boots are knee-high riding boots. The gloves are big gauntlets. The cape itself, probably the biggest change, is like an Inverness cloak with the double flap *a la* Sherlock Holmes. The mask is a fairly primitive version.

Commissioner Tolliver, "an obvious political appointee with little or no knowledge of police work who drives the case in the wrong direction."

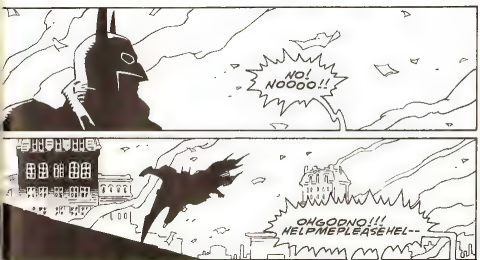
In our reality, the object of their investigation forever eluded Queen Victoria's justice, yet in doing so, he found himself eternally trapped by countless writers and filmmakers. Criminologists and journalists have, for the last century, used the available evidence to reveal Red Jack as the product of a vast, monstrous conspiracy in some cases and as any one of a multitude of lone maniacs in many more. Others have preferred to let less easily misled heroes—Sherlock Holmes, a time-traveling H.G. Wells and the crew of the starship *Enterprise* among them—end the butcher of Whitechapel's terror for them, but they seem only to have uncovered their own score of spurious Saucy Jacks. In that regard, Augustyn admits, the Darknight Detective will fare no better.

"I did plenty of research in terms of what has been written, and certainly in the last two years, there have been a couple of new books out, each with their own individual theory, and what the plot [of *Gotham by Gaslight*] is about is an *entirely different* solution, using much of the background," says the writer, stressing served the story, and then we would extrapolate once we brought it over to Gotham.

"The police are technically more aware of who they're dealing with because of the previous case. There's also this guy in a bat-suit who's essentially one step behind. One of my favorite angles on the story is that when the pressure to solve the case pushes it forward, this blowhard Commissioner Tolliver decides that he knows who is responsible and then puts together this slipshod case. Jack the Ripper supposedly had medical knowledge because his dissections were too precise, so they look for a person who might have some sort of medical background and then they look for somebody who can't account for their nights—and *Bruce Wayne* gets arrested! He actually has to face the gallows or solve the case from his cell at Arkham."

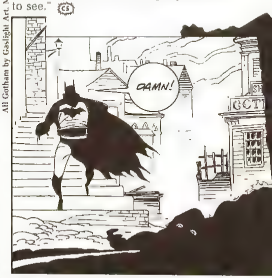
And should this volume, which also contains "a one-page intro by the master of Ripper fiction," Robert Bloch, fascinate modern readers as much as Red Jack's actual atrocities did the London public of a century ago, this Victorian version of Gotham's grim guardian may yet return to combat the horrors of an earlier age.

"Right now, I think both Mike and I are almost exhausted by the process," chuckles Brian Augustyn, "and we're a little reluctant to look that far. On the other hand, every now and then, little things bubble to the surface, and not long ago, Mike said, 'You know what we should do now? We should have Batman meet Dracula next!' So, there's not going to be real trouble finding the next story and probably not even three or four beyond that. It's all a question of what people want to see."



"Gotham City's only beginning to get real crime-ridden," Augustyn notes. "The naive days are just passing."

All Gotham by Gaslight Art: Mike Mignola/Craig Russell



Augustyn doubts he "was actually influenced by any one particular [past Ripper] story, but I certainly have always enjoyed Robert Bloch's stuff."

It's like a heavy wool hood with the leather face mask stitched onto it; the stitching is evident in close-ups."

Alfred Pennyworth still serves and counsels his young master, although Wayne, at least in this world, also takes advice from Uncle Jake, "who is an old family friend and his lawyer." James Gordon too is active in this cowled avenger's Gotham, but only as a mere inspector forced to answer to that their explanation of the crimes "works within the story. Mike Mignola really outdid himself in the research, even to the point of actually visiting Whitechapel in London, so he has incorporated some of the physical things he picked up over there, like strange little archways and alleyways that wind off into the fog. He's probably an even bigger Ripper expert than I am. Between the two of us, we managed to use much of that detail and the facts of the case in so far as it

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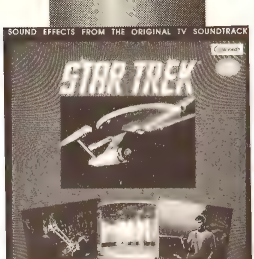

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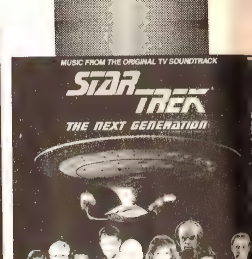

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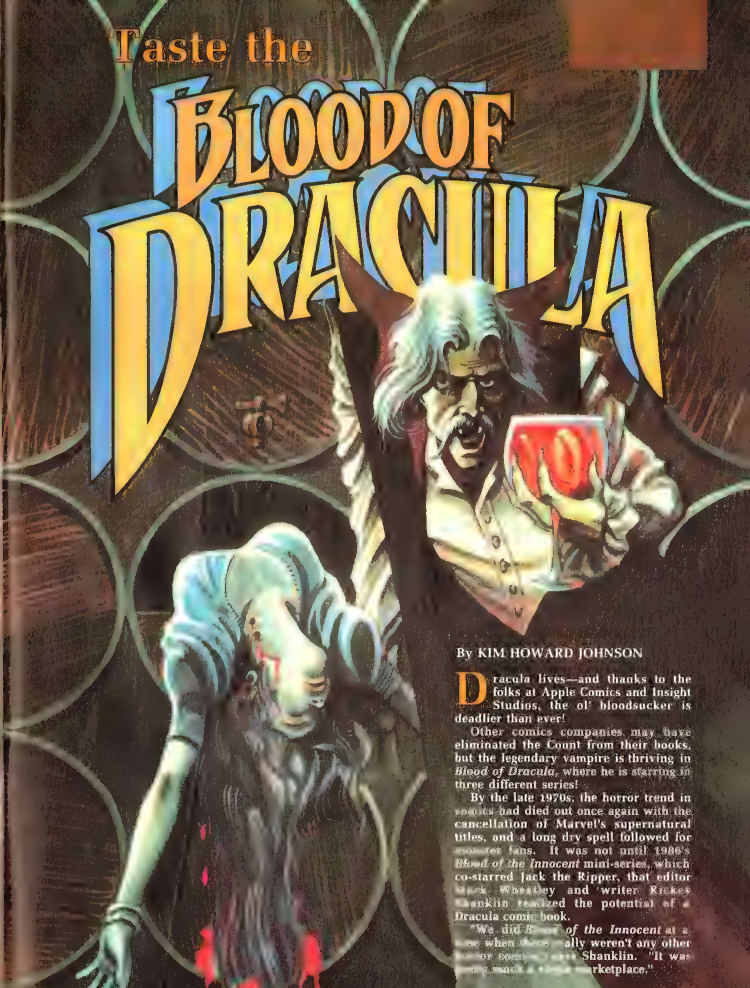


By KIM HOWARD JOHNSON

Dracula lives—and thanks to the folks at Apple Comics and Insight Studios, the ol' bloodsucker is deadlier than ever!

Other comics companies may have eliminated the Count from their books, but the legendary vampire is thriving in *Blood of Dracula*, where he is starring in three different series!

By the late 1970s, the horror trend in comics had died out once again with the cancellation of Marvel's supernatural titles, and a long dry spell followed for monster fans. It was not until 1986's *Blood of the Innocent* mini-series, which co-starred Jack the Ripper, that editor Mark Wheatley and writer Rickey Shanklin realized the potential of a Dracula comic book.

"We did *Blood of the Innocent* at a time when there really weren't any other [illegible] Shanklin. "It was [illegible] marketplace."

1989 Mark Wheatley

Art: Topham Hayes/Copyright 1989 Mark Wheatley & Rick Shanklin

In "Death Dreams", Dracula is but a spectre attracted to the evil in others.

So, when the four-issue mini-series proved successful, Apple publisher Mike Catron asked the team to develop a regular title starring the vampire. Although they weren't sure what they wanted to do, they knew that they had no desire to repeat the formula of Marvel's long-running '70s series, *Tomb of Dracula*.

"One of the things I *didn't* want to do was a feature-length, monthly Dracula book. It had been done before, and I saw the limitations of really plumbing the character out too quickly. He's *not* a superhero and can't be played that way," says Shanklin. "Seventy-two issues is a long time to do a book-length story about a vampire."

"We also didn't agree with the characterization of Dracula—I mean, I enjoyed the series, but it wasn't what we wanted to do," says Wheatley. "We wanted somebody with a bit more edge, who's actually *evil*. Marvel always tended to hedge it—'a nasty guy, but he had his nice side.'"

Blood of Dracula stars a truly demonic vampire in three different series within the title, tracing the monster at three very different periods in his life. "Count Dracula" takes place a few years prior to the events in Bram Stoker's novel. "Death Dreams of Dracula" is set between the time the vampire is destroyed at the end of Stoker's novel and his eventual resurrection approximately 200 years from now. "Dracula 2199" takes place in that futuristic era. Together, the three make up what Wheatley jokingly calls "a bookful of back-up features."

Shanklin confesses "Count Dracula" is an outgrowth of the Hammer films, although he has tried to infuse some of Stoker's character into the traditional Hammer settings.

"Count Dracula" is just one of three servings on *Blood of Dracula*'s menu.

With issue #13, "Count" began a vampiresque version of *Frankenstein*, which pits Dracula against a scientific descendant of Dr. Frankenstein, Dr. Stroehmann.

"He's working with his notebooks trying to re-animate vivisection experiments, trying to bring back the dead," Shanklin explains. "He has come to Bukovina to capture Dracula and use his essence in his creations. Mike McCarthy is on hand for the artwork for the seven-part storyline, which includes a 'Death Dreams' that introduces the character."

"The 'Death Dreams' take place after his supposed death, and he's in a netherworld," explains Wheatley. "He doesn't really go into a true death. He wanders like a ghost, from the time he is destroyed in the late 1800s to the time he's revived in 2199. He interacts with people who have dark personalities, dark dreams and evil souls—Dracula is drawn to them, and sometimes manifests himself and affects their lives."

Those "Death Dreams" presented thus far have involved Nazi Germany, Prohibition, psycho killer Ed Gein,

ople is a force of nature that wants
at is good for people on this
Editor Mark Wheatley.

Art: By & Copyright 1989 Berni Wrightson/Courtesy Apple Comics

the Chinese revolution and Hiroshima. Upcoming tales include art by Bill Messner-Loebs and Bruce Patterson.

"In some cases, Dracula is drawn to people who have been done very dirty by the world, and he's drawn to the fact that these people are suffering as well," says Wheatley. "Sometimes, he manifests himself physically, other times, he's just an ethereal presence."

The "Dracula 2199" series takes place in a world ruled by a scientific elite. The scientists have made themselves immortal, live in hi-tech, germ-free, sterile environments, and refuse to believe in any supernatural beings or mythologies.

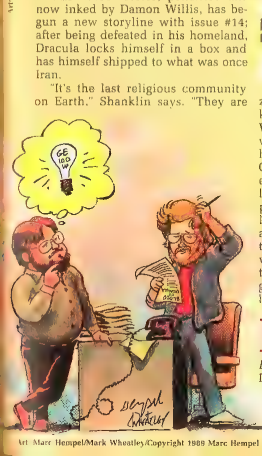
"They've turned science into a religion," notes Wheatley, "and they're the perfect contrast to Dracula."

"The scientists have done away with all religious icons, books, churches, and pretty well decided that if it can't be proven, it doesn't exist," says Shanklin. "So, after centuries, Dracula is brought back by someone who is rebelling against the scientists. Dracula is unfamiliar with the concept of robots, these strange weapons and these silver cities.

"However, they can't see him with their detector equipment because he doesn't photograph; they won't believe he exists, even though he's killing people. They refuse to accept his existence because they can't prove it," says Shanklin.

The "2199" series, pencilled and now inked by Damon Willis, has begun a new storyline with issue #14; after being defeated in his homeland, Dracula locks himself in a box and has himself shipped to what was once Iran.

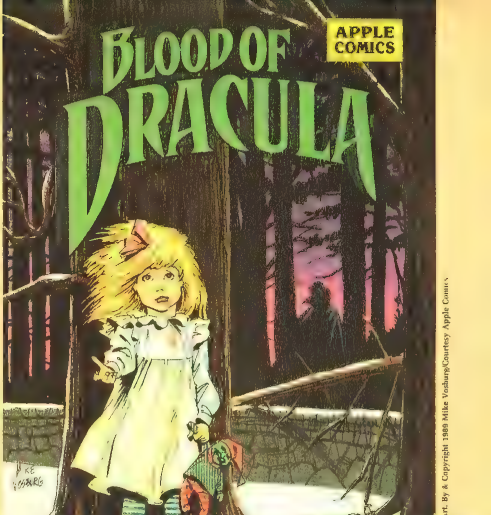
"It's the last religious community on Earth," Shanklin says. "They are zealous, militaristic Muslims who keep pace with scientific technology. When Dracula walks through all the weapons without being harmed, he is hailed by some of the people as 'the Cloaked One.' Having some knowledge of world history and mythology, he picks up on this and starts making prophecies he knows he can fulfill, like the raising of the dead. He slays a few of their children by biting them, then raises them from the dead—as vampires. He then sets himself up as the ruler of the Mideast and puts together this massive army to strike back at the Christians.



Art: Marc Hempel/Mark Wheatley/Copyright 1989 Marc Hempel

Art imitates life? That's Mark Wheatley (right) trying to make heads or tails of Rick Shanklin's script.

Both Wheatley and Shanklin say they have a number of special features in store for *Blood of Dracula* through issue #19. "Death Dreams" will be missing from a few issues to come, to make room for "The Frankenstein Papers," consisting of material done by Berni Wrightston prior to his illustrated *Frankenstein*, including many never-before-seen



Art: Mike Mitchell/Copyright 1989 Mark Wheatley & Rick Shanklin

Part of the book emotes Hammer Films' cinematic chills.

Art: By & Copyright 1989 Mike Vosburg/Courtesy Apple Comics

Art: Damon Willis/Copyright 1989 Mark Wheatley & Rick Shanklin

The last helping involves the resurrected Count in a world that doesn't understand him, but may worship "Dracula 2199."

Rather than stick solely to the vampiric lore set up by Bram Stoker, the creative team makes use of various legends.

drawings. Issue #15 will feature a flexi-disc with music performed by Wheatley, along with Tim Truman, Rich Rankin and Tod Steranko.

In addition to the established pros, Wheatley says he has enjoyed developing several new artists. "The first one to really hit big was Adam Hughes, who is currently doing *Justice League America*. The new artist on the series, Mike McCarthy, is also going to hit very big. He has a very different, heavy-duty, spine-shivering take on Dracula."

Partly because of McCarthy's style, Wheatley says they are planning to end *Blood of Dracula* with issue #19. The vampire's fans need not worry, though—the team is planning to do a brand-new, for mature-readers-only series called *Dracula In Hell*, which Shanklin says is inspired by both Rumanian folklore and Stoker's book.

"If you read between the lines of the Stoker novel, somebody's trying to figure out Dracula's origins at one point. There's a brief mention on one page that he was taught at the Skullmas in the Carpathian Mountains, which is supposed to be a school run by the devil," explains Shanklin.

"Ten students were selected, and through the process of either elimination or combat, one of them would sit at the devil's right hand. It is never mentioned to the other nine, but the winner of this semester in Hell gains part of the power of Satan himself—which is how Dracula has manifested himself on Earth. This series sets up what happened to those other nine, along with the fact that Dracula has not played fairly. It's a pretty nasty series—nine visions of Hell, with Dracula stuck in each of them!"

Dracula in Hell is just another reflection of Shanklin's longtime interest in vampires; he has done extensive research, including tracking down a very rare tome of authentic Rumanian folklore written in the mid-1800s.

"It's the book that Stoker used to write *Dracula*," Shanklin says. "It's out of print, never been reprinted, never been published in this country—the Library of Congress doesn't know what it is! It took me a while to find it. It turned out to be a series of volumes, and I spent hours just making copies. It contains some wonderful stuff—it's no wonder *Dracula* came to be, after Stoker read this!

"Stoker had to pare down what he did," adds Wheatley. "He just took a little bit here and there to come up with *Dracula*. Since we have an ongoing series, there's a *wealth* of information here that he didn't even scratch! It's all based on first-hand, extensive interviews with natives in the hills."

"There are stories in there that are more wicked than anything we've ever told," laughs Shanklin, noting that at least one of the initial six issues of *Dracula in Hell* will probably be sold in a plastic bag due to the story's unpleasant nature.

In addition to *Dracula in Hell*, the team has other projects in the works. They plan to follow *Blood of Dracula* with the two-issue *Big Bad Blood of Dracula*.

"The first cover is done in the style of *The Weekly World News*; the headline is 'Hitler Has Been Cloned, He is Alive Today and He Looks Like a Giant Bloodsucking Pig. Say Experts—Exclusive Story and Pictures.' We also have another feature, which we're calling 'threehundredsomething,' and we ask the question, 'Was Dracula ever a yuppie?' It's a history of Dracula between the years 1430 and 2200," says Wheatley, who calls it the definitive chronology of the vampire king. "The book's lead feature, though, is something Mike McCarthy developed, which has already appeared once in *Mr. Monster*. It's called 'Cadavera.'"

"She's made from the body parts of dead starlets—she's hot, she's sexy, she's the next big thing, and she's dead!" laughs Shanklin.

"This is really sick horror, with a stronger emphasis on humor in the lead feature than we've ever had before," Wheatley says. "The second issue has our contest cover; the first 2,000 names entered will be listed. And the grand prize winner gets killed on the cover by Dracula."

The Bat, a vampire one-shot, will debut soon.

"He's a superhero with powers derived directly from Dracula; this is a self-contained story with art by Neil Vokes and Damon Willis," says Wheatley. "This is no-holds-barred, two-fisted crimefighter action set in the '30s."

Wheatley notes that their Dracula tends to adhere to the traditional guidelines, largely because the variety of possible interpretations are so broad. "There's a hell of a wide variety of vampire

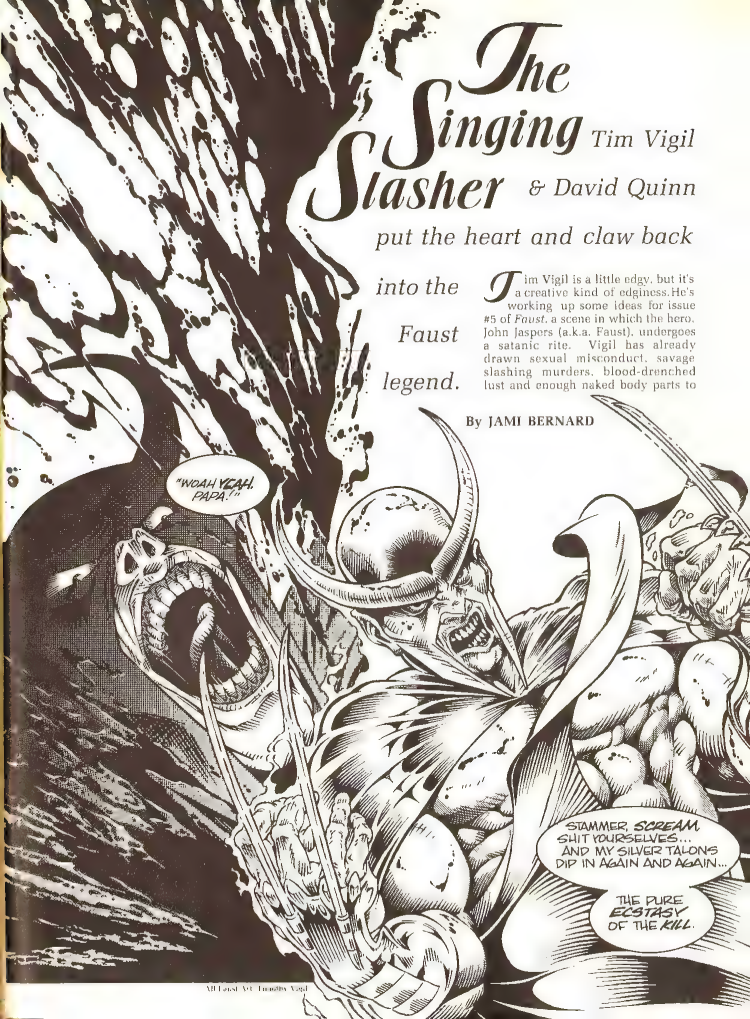
(continued on page 60)

The Singing Slasher

Tim Vigil & David Quinn put the heart and claw back into the Faust legend.

By JAMI BERNARD

Tim Vigil is a little edgy, but it's a creative kind of edginess. He's working up some ideas for issue #5 of *Faust*, a scene in which the hero, John Jaspers (a.k.a. Faust), undergoes a satanic rite. Vigil has already drawn sexual misconduct, savage slashing murders, blood-drenched lust and enough naked body parts to



All Faust Art Timothy Vigil

give his publisher distemper, but now he is about to top himself—and he is going to start by depicting a woman and a snake in such a way that the front of issue #5 will have to be double-covered, as it was for issue #2.

"I can see this being banned," says Vigil pleasantly, relaxing in his hotel room at the San Diego Comic Con. "It's going to be *extremely* pornographic. The story calls for it. There will be explicit imagery. I warn Dan constantly, since he's the one who hears the flak."

Dan is Dan Madsen, of North Star Publishing, who has nervously given Vigil and writer David Quinn just about carte blanche to create the 12-issue *Faust*. The story is roughly about a mental ward patient who sprouts long nails and terrorizes a city as "The Singing Slasher," mostly killing guys who are annoying the beautiful psychiatrist who has been giving Jaspers some, uh, *intensive* therapy in private.

"It's a very intense book," says Madsen. "It's also very touching."

In fact, its co-creators see *Faust* as a love story. "Historically, stories about trips to Hell are love stories," says Quinn. "Dante looked for Beatrice, Orpheus for Eurydice. John Jaspers has Jade De Camp, who tries to cure him through abstract painting." If John Jaspers sounds a little like famed artist Jasper Johns, by the way, that's intentional, as are other

At the heart of *Faust*'s darkness is the love story between the insane John Jaspers and psychiatrist Jade De Camp.

little homages throughout the book. A file cabinet is full of folders labeled Gil Kane, Steve Ditko, John Buscema, Howard Chaykin and Frank Miller. And a graveyard is littered with the tombs of Frank Frazetta, Berni Wrightson and others.

But back to *Faust*

"We want to make it as emotionally dangerous, as viscerally dangerous as we can imagine," says Quinn. "The emotional level of most comics is so shallow that when someone sees a movie with characters who aren't well-developed, it becomes a stigma—'comic-book characters'—and I get all riled up. It doesn't *have* to be that way in comics. You *can* do something a little bit deeper, something more violent, more dangerous, or even more romantic."

For romance, there's Jaspers/Faust dragging his Freddy Krueger fingernails tenderly across psychiatrist Jade De Camp's face; she's both attracted and repelled. "That's one of my favorite scenes," says Vigil jovially, pointing to a panel in the fourth issue. "He takes the blood on his claws and just rubs it across her lips. It's so sensuous. She doesn't like it, but she loves it."

"But it's not *just* sex and violence," pipes up Madsen helpfully. "It's a powerful story."

The story is evidently an amalgam of two sources, one of them the Faust legend, "in which an innocent tries to survive and find a bit of humanity in a very violent, hellish world," according to Quinn. The other source is Quinn and Vigil's hankering to do a story "dealing with the dark side, the act of evil for good," according to Vigil. The two hooked up through a mutual friend a couple of years ago and mapped out the plot of *Faust*. Now, Quinn writes the scripts in New Jersey and sends them out to Vigil in Sacramento, CA. They only meet occasionally to iron out problems.

"He's actually written stuff that *I* was confused on," says Vigil, "where I didn't know where it was going."

Vigil isn't alone. Aside from objections to the graphic violence and nudity, the most frequently heard complaint is that the story is hard to follow. But take heart, Faust fans—things get more straightforward with issue #6, when Jaspers begins to remember more about his shady past

SOME WOULD SAY YOU'VE GONE MAD... WHAT WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOU ARE DOING NOW?
WHAT ANY SANE MAN WHO HAS SEEN WHAT I HAVE SEEN WOULD DO...
All Faust Art, Trademark & Copyright 1998 David Quinn, Tim Vigil & Rebel Studios

Faust sees the world from a crazed viewpoint. "All he knows is violence and sex," explains artist Tim Vigil.

and is better able to distinguish between reality and fantasy.

"It's interesting to try to write a book about someone who s lost his mind," says Quinn. "You want to give the reader a sense of feeling of how it's like to be totally cut loose and adrift in the world, to be without sanity, without coherence, connection or private thought. So, you're always adrift in the first five issues.'

"The hallucination scenes get very intense," comments Vigil. "I'm trying to keep them where what's depicted is equal to what's being said, but you'll go, 'Oh, what the *hell* is going on?' Readers have to get past their initial shock to understand what happens."

Vigil goes on to describe the orgy scene he was planning: most of his

ONCE THOUGHT TO BE LOST, MADE A- do it baby BRILLIANT DEBUT!!
"THE CULMINATION OF HAYDN'S WORK... —oh yeah"
POP
M DOESN'T TOUCH ANYTHING, EXCEPT HIMSELF. DOESN'T NEED TO.

Love means never having to say you're sorry—especially for the deadly Claire.

"People kept saying after the first issue that there's no story and it's just blatant violence and sex," says Vigil. 'Well, this is what the character feels. All he knows is blatant violence and sex. And he's so confused.'

"Yeah, raging like a mad dog," adds Quinn.

"Mad dog, that sounds good.' Vigil agrees. "But as the story progressed, people started to see this, and we're getting good feedback. The character himself is beginning to understand.'

"As he approaches clarity, by issue #6, we finally hear his voice undiluted. He has an experience," says Quinn. "I won't tell you what it is.'

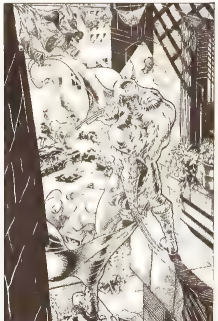
But, they will talk about the infamous issue #5. "He's tapped into the energy released in the random violence of these first few issues," says Quinn. "It's all part of this plot to stir up this well of negative violence."

During Jaspers' hallucinations in that scene, he sees his own innocence in the form of a baby, and is about to kill it, but holds back. "The baby is what's left of his own goodness, his own innocence, and he must confront that," says Quinn.

This is as much as we can show you of the twisted cover of *Faust* #5. The creators promise that things will start making sense as the series continues.

description is unquotable in a family magazine, but you get the drift. "We're talking to the devil, right? And he's sitting in his chair, saying, 'What are you going to do for me?' So, OK, he cuts the throat of his child, but that's not enough. He cuts the throat of his child and rapes the kid. The devil goes, 'That's been done.' It's, like, how *much* do you have to do to call up the devil? We're talking *pure* evil. So, I must come up with ideas to depict this in the most horrifying and graphic way. I can't leave it to anyone's imagination to see exactly what I want to show him. If I depict it with a shadow, you're not going to see it right. Your imagination isn't as warped as mine at that point. You've *got* to see it with as much detail, or as much gore, or as much perversity as is meant to be depicted."

When Vigil says detail, he means it. He spends hours laboring over his finely crafted drawings. "Detail is something that has been lost in many comics, and I think Bill Sienkiewicz has a lot to do with that. I bring my portfolio someplace, and they go *flip, flip, flip* through it. I say, 'LOOK AT THIS PIECE.' This book is not a book that you can read through quick or look at quick. You have to get involved with it. I like detail. I like the idea that I spend a lot of time on the page. It's what *I'm* giving to the audience. Not like that Wolverine stuff. I puke at that stuff. It's like, how long did you spend on that page? Were you able to ink three pages a day, where it takes me three days to ink one page? If our book is charging


All Faust Art: Courtesy North Star Publishing

$2.25, I want to feel that what I put into it was heart and soul."

And claws and blood and... but the main thing to remember, say the creators—a little defensively, and a bit often—is that all the graphic gore and sex is in the service of higher purpose, a story about a man stripped of his humanity and trying to find his way back home. "This is not just for the sake of perversity," states Vigil. On the other hand, Quinn admits that "the more people try to tone us down, the more I push up against it. It's definitely an *in-your-face* situation."

Quinn likens Faust to the EC Comics of the '50s; Madsen calls it "a form of Hitchcockian terror." Vigil agreed to tone down the "pelvic area" of the nude Faust for the cover of issue #4 in exchange for free reign over his satanic rites in #5. He doesn't believe there's an upper limit to the horrific things you can do with comics, "at least I hope not.

"We're gonna offend many people," agrees Madsen.

Quinn promises that the various subplots will be tied up—these include some violent bedside murders, drug deals gone bad, a "trends" reporter through whose overripe prose we are introduced to the story in the first issue, some hints that Jaspers was once buried alive, and, of course, the love story between Jaspers and Jade. There is also Claire, a bitch goddess who snuffs out lovers during sex; even black widows wait until the act is done before pulling the plug.

In fact, the scene in which Claire offs her lover was changed by Vigil with Quinn's consent, an example of the give and take between the two artistic forces. "David had written that when Claire killed the Vito character, that she slams his head into a mirror. I thought that was too physical for what was going on. I wanted a certain seduction," says Vigil. "I said, 'Hey, what do you think of this?' She's making love with this guy, puts her hand on his face, caressing his cheeks, and suddenly, *poof*! In the eyes!' "

Quinn nods merrily. "I leave some of it open so that Tim can have a vi-

(continued on page 66)

Call Him DOG STEARN... MR. MONSTER

By SCOTT LOBDELL

For Strongfort Stearn, crushing creatures isn't just an adventure—it's his job!

Whenever a young child is threatened, whenever a monster of any sort seeks dominion (or even temporary residence) over Earth, whenever creatures of the night attempt to terrorize the lives of innocents anywhere...there stands Mr. Monster!

A barrel-chested, jaw-protruding, child-saving adventurer, and also the adopted brainchild of writer-illustrator and "sort of" creator Michael T. Gilbert, Mr. Monster is guest starring in his own eight-issue mini series/graphic novel courtesy of Dark Horse Comics. In the tradition of black-and-white monster movie classics like *Frankenstein*, *Dracula* and *I Was a Teenage Werewolf*, this similarly based multi-part opus features the origin of Mr. Monster's alter-ego... in a roundabout way.

"I've always felt that very often, whenever you see an origin, it's 'This guy gets hit by a Krypton Ray and gets super powers!'" explains Gilbert as he reveals why Dr. Strongfort Stearn's origin focuses in large part on the exploits of his paternal predecessor (with the extra "o" on his surname) in the centuries-spanning Mr. Monster Dynasty. While the life story of Dr. Jim Stearne, the 1940s Mr. Monster, might be fascinating in its own right, is it germane to the lighthearted exploits of the present-day hero? Gilbert believes so. "I figured an origin story should be a *real* origin story. You should find out about his parents. You should find out who he is, where he came from, and what really makes the character who he is."

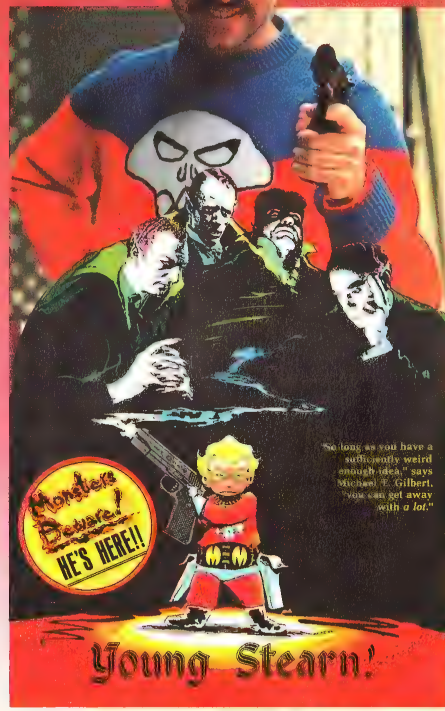

"so long as you have a sufficiently weird enough idea," says Michael T. Gilbert, "you can get away with *a lot.*"
Monsters Beware! HE'S HERE!!
Young Stearn!

Photo Courtesy Michael T. Gilbert

All Mr. Monster Art © and ™ Michael T. Gilbert

Those familiar with Mr. Monster's modern-day adventures (his one-shot debut in Pacific Comics in 1983 and his more recent 20-issue tenure at Eclipse Comics prior to his migration to Dark Horse), might not recognize him. Temporarily gone from the pages of the heretofore humorous title is its anything-goes silliness.

"It always struck me that he's a very flexible character," begins Gilbert, assuming readers this was a conscious decision. "One of the challenges for me is that I've always felt I could do the 'yuk-yuk *Megaton Man*' type stories, but if I wanted to—by turning the dial more toward horror and toning down the humor—Mr. Monster could work as a *serious* character. That was, in part, my impetus for doing this.

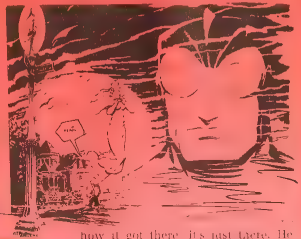
"What I've *always* tried to do with the character was take advantage of the inherent strengths of comic books that in large measure have been lost or put aside in their quest for 'dignity' and 'acceptance.' " It has been a philosophy that has served Gilbert well since the day he thumbed through a Golden Age bargain bin and stumbled across the 1947 *Super Duper Comics*

Notes Gilbert, "The people I pick" to render their own versions of his hero "are the cream of the crop," whether they're fan favorites or newcomers.

#3, a color comic featuring "Doc Jim Stearne...Mr. Monster." (Not a bad legacy for a 50¢ investment.) Although he thoroughly overhauled what began as a second-rate Doc Savage retread, Gilbert remained true to the spirit of Canadian writer/artist Fred Kelly's archetype of a '40s-style adventurer by keeping the rules regarding any Mr. Monster story simple.

"Mr. Monster *always* wants to kill monsters. He *likes* what he's doing. I would say the only thing he loves more than killing monsters is saving kids. Those are his two big obsessions. Within that context, I can play around a lot with the story.

"If I want him to go back in time, I have him go down to his basement and get in his time machine! I don't have to go on for 50 issues explaining



how it got there. It's just there. He wants to go to Mars? I just built this spaceship last week! I've established the ground rules so that all of this can be accessible.

Let it be known that stagnation will never be the order of the day, as Gilbert intends to stretch this framework, and his own storytelling talents, into new directions with his current mini-series. While framing devices for the story, titled "Origins," allow glimpses and insights into Doc Stearn's character, Stronghold doesn't make much of an impression until the tale's second half. (Perfectly understandable considering the character isn't even born until the fifth issue.) In the final chapters of the origin story, you'll actually get to see young Doc Stearn. You'll learn much more about the fears and horrors of what he had to go through as a kid and why he's particularly concerned with helping children."

This month, in issue #5, six-year old Stronglott learns, or at least suspects, that his Suzy Homemaker mom is actually a vampire! Posing as a nurse, Lilly seduced the disenchanted Dr. Jim Stearne with the promise of domestic bliss in an effort to break the centuries-old Mr. Monster bloodline.

3-D
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I HAVE BEEN OBSERVING THE PLANET MARS! THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT MY OLD FRIENDS, THE MARTIANS, HAVE LAUNCHED ONE OF THEIR PERIODIC INVASIONS!
HEY, DOC!
I JUST SAW THE FUNNIEST LOOKING METEOR...

Just another quiet (though not for long) evening at home with Dr. Strongfort Stearn and his faithful girl Friday, Kelly.

the plan being that the undead are unable to bear children. Once the monster-slaying dynasty comes grinding to a halt, every werewolf, vampire and distant cousin of Mr. Hyde would pillage the planet, unopposed until the end of time. Everything was working perfectly until the unexpected and otherwise impossible birth of Strongfort Stearn.

"In issue #6, the older Mr. Monster has been retired for the past five or six years," explains Gilbert. "Jim Stearne has ballooned up to 250 pounds, he's overworked, there's a lot of guilt there over his retirement, but he's taking Lilly at face value." In contrast of father to son, "The kid is sharp. He's starting to smell a rat.

"One time, he brings home a bat and shocks his mother. He doesn't see her reflection in the mirror. As a six-year-old, he doesn't quite know 100 percent what's happening. At this point, the vampires [behind the charade] have decided this has gone on for much too long." Getting him alone at the Stearne mansion, long since boarded up and abandoned, the vampires are waiting to ambush young Doc Stearn at the issue's conclusion.

"Then, we really get into the blood and guts in issue #7. On one side of the estate, there's a whole contingent of vampires waiting for Jim Stearne to come home, which he does. In issue #8, we're going to see a little of the growing-up process of young Doc Stearn, but basically this is the story of the life and death of the original Mr. Monster. It's Jim Stearne's story—it's the story of a family."

From the start, I hadn't thought of a Mr. Monster origin story, I mean, I've been doing this for a few years without ever worrying about a 'real' origin for him," Gilbert confesses. (In fact, past stories each began with their own *completely* different origin captions.) "When I went about doing this story, I tried to make something that would capture the essence of what *my* version of Mr. Monster was, even though it was in a much more serious vein." There were other considerations to this epic as well. "I was consciously trying to do my first full-length graphic novel. I wanted fully fleshed-out characters and situations.

"The idea of using different viewpoints from chapter to chapter" or issue to issue (a vampire telling the story from his point-of-view, another part told from the perspective of Mr. Monster's father's ex-fiance's husband), "is another thing you can do when you have this kind of space in which to tell a story. To a certain extent, it was and is an exercise. It's about five times longer than any other

The habits that one picks up as a child...

story I've attempted. It's tricky."

Why didn't he just take the plunge and write an outright graphic novel? Gilbert responds with typical candor. "Simply because no one is going to say, 'Here's $20,000, sit down, take a year or two, and do this thing.' The only way I could possibly do this, and even hope to approach it, is in small pieces."

Gilbert believes a great many of today's comics have lost their senses of humor. "Most of the comics from Marvel or DC are deadly serious – *The New Titans, The X-Men*, whatever humor that is in there is a different kind of humor. It's not a silly, anything-goes humor that *Mr. Monster*, at its best, does." He believes the root of the problem is the creator's preoccupation with the perception of comics outside the industry. "They're trying to impress you with how serious comics are as an art form.

"The best stuff doesn't *have* to impress you, you're just pulled into it. You get something out of it," he says. "You either get pure entertainment, or it teaches you a lesson on some level without beating you over the head. So many comics you look at today are working so hard to be 'respectable.' 'Oh, comics are really serious!' It doesn't have to be proven to 'them'; whoever 'them' happens to be—the readers, the *New York Times*, whoever it is you're trying to impress.

"I always write for myself, for someone who can appreciate a good, fun, silly, intelligent story," says Gilbert. "I think Joe Average, coming from outside the comics field, who doesn't know about the cliches but

There's always time (and a place) for a Mr. Monster.

Sure, it's a dirty job, but someone's got to keep the sewers safe for decent folk.

just likes a good little story, would be much more inclined to enjoy *Mr. Monster*'s humorous style. Present-day comics audiences have become so ingrown, so used to seeing fifth generation Jack Kirby and Neal Adams, the whole company style with greater violence and mord titillation, that there aren't a good deal of people left reading comics who would appreciate something like the 1950s Superman-type silly, straightforward stories of the old Captain Marvel and Plastic Man."

Future storylines, which will appear either in a new ongoing title or as a series of mini-series, include investigating all the possible incarnations of the Mr. Monster Dynasty. "The role was passed down from father to son, or generation to generation, so there are all sorts of variations. What happens if you have twins? How many times did Mr. Monster battle Dracula over the centuries? Which Mr. Monsters? What happens to a generation where there wasn't a male, or a male got killed too early? A wife might, and *has* in fact, then taken the role.

"They all had different, very strong personalities. I would like to do a series of back-up eight-pagers of different Mr. Monsters from different times." But, before fans start haunting the local comics store, Gilbert adds this disclaimer: "I've already got a ton of stories I *haven't* done yet, so this would be way down the line."

On the subject of frequency and keeping his book on schedule, Gilbert offers, "All I can say is I wish I was faster. The final project has always been the most important to me. I've always felt that if it took me a little longer to get the story done, I would take that time. This is not the smartest attitude to take, and I do feel bad about it.

"There's a certain feeling that 50 years from now, when people are reading these stories --*if* they're reading these stories—they're not going to care if I was a month or two late. They're just going to look at the story itself."

The one story they may never get to read is the long-awaited Michael T. Gilbert/Alan Moore collaboration featuring the team-up of Mr. Monster and DC's Swamp Thing. "It doesn't look like it's going to happen," Gilbert reveals. "We had signed the contract, DC and Eclipse [the very first contract DC had ever signed with an independent publisher], but Alan was too busy at that point to do a script. Last year, he finally had some time when he could do it and everything was go.

"Then, he had some problem with

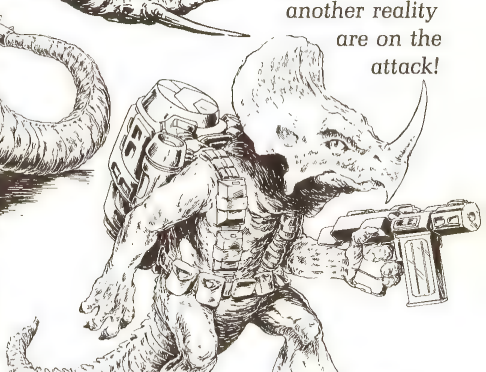
(continued on page 60)

By T.L. JOHNS

Charge of the Commandosaurs

Rampaging reptiles from another reality are on the attack!

Bran, the mysterious surgeon.



Broc, the team's powerhouse.

What would have happened if, all those years ago, the dinosaurs had not met with their fateful end? The world *might* have looked something like the reality guarded by the *Commandosaurs* devised by *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle* co-creator Peter Laird and goremeister Steve Bissette.

Published by Mirage Studios, which Laird co-founded with *TMNT* co-creator Kevin Eastman, *Commandosaurs* has its roots in a meeting at Bissette's home two years ago.

"Two years ago," explains Laird, "I was so much into this toy idea that I wondered, what would be the *neatest* toy I could come up with that I would like to play with? And I *love* dinosaurs. So, what if we give dinosaurs guns and let them run around in weird outfits and call them Commandosaurs? So, the next couple of months I toyed around with sketches. I had six original characters. I was going with the idea, but I wasn't really excited about it. It was kind of dorky. Then, I came up with the Ghellies, these slimy, yucky creatures. I also got concerned because I can't draw dinosaurs that well. But I knew Steve could."

"Yep, it was June when you came up and we sat in my yard and talked about it," Bissette adds.

"He just started to throw out these ideas, and within an hour, the concept was about 250 percent better," Laird confesses. "Practically all of my original plot and stuff went out the window. We left in the Commandosaurs and the Ghellies, but Steve injected these Terrorsaurs."

"I dug these out that afternoon after we had started to make notes," continues Bissette, pointing to some sketches of reptilian creatures with lots of nasty looking teeth. "I had done these designs which were originally intended for a project for DC, which Cary Bates was doing. This was the catalyst. I owned the designs I had done lock, stock and barrel because I had never been paid by DC and I never signed anything. These are what I showed Peter and he got excited about the idea of the duality. You've got the Comman-

Burg, leader of the Commandosaurs.

dosaurs, the nominal heroes and you've got the frightening-looking Terrorsaurs. In fact, I think we came up with the name that afternoon."

But an even more significant element was added that day.

"Another important thing that happened when I talked to Steve about this idea," Laird notes, "is that we decided there would be *no* human beings in it."

"And that was part of my desire to draw it, that I didn't have to draw anything with human beings. I just wanted to indulge in a complete fantasy world. Pete and I both love dinosaurs, we never outgrew that love, and it's always interruptive while you're indulging in that fantasy world to have to deal with Fay Wray or whoever.

"We've just been assuming that it's another planet, another reality altogether," elaborates Bissette, "which is very freeing. We're able to concentrate on the story at hand and on the characters, to make them real instead of defining them by making them play off of human characters. They've got their own culture, their own rules of conduct and their own history."

Aquatic Commandosaur Cray.

Communications officer Lilly.

Those who decide to enter Bissette and Laird's new world will find themselves in the realm of the Archosaurs. These large dinosaur-like creatures are split into several categories: the Commandosaurs, members of the military; the Terrorsaurs, rogue grotesque creatures whom the Commandosaurs see as their enemy; and an elite class of intellectuals who are among the oldest living creatures on the planet. Readers will also encounter the Ghellies, insectoid things that live underground, but every two centuries surface to reap destruction.

It's that lack of human characters, Bissette explains, which has allowed the duo to freely develop the Archosaurs' culture.

"It frees us up in terms of clothes. Humans need clothing because we need protection. They've got skin like a tank so we wondered how they would ornament themselves. We've talked about tattoos in the scales or scrimshaw on horns. And it becomes a sign of wherever you sit in the culture as to how beautifully you're scrimshawed, or how many jewels you wear. It also meant when Pete was doing the actual design of the outfitting and the gunware, he was free to make it simply functional. That's all that mattered, that it was functional and fit around the body.

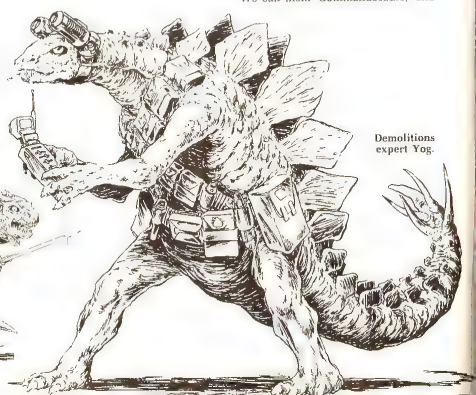
"The ruling elite of the Archosaurs have abandoned the flesh all together," says Bissette. "They're just these brains in this soup that project holographic images of what they once were. It's a corny old science-fiction thing, but we like it.

"What we were playing with, with the story idea, is how can we make it so that even though it looks like good versus evil, that our story *undermines* that whole concept. Just because the Terrorsaurs are ugly doesn't mean they're bad. The *real* villains of the piece are the Ghellies. They're mindless, feeding and mating machines that emerge from the bowels of the planet every 200 years. Then, it's a mini-Armageddon. They just demolish what was built before and the Archosaurs must start almost from scratch. There's this master plan that the Archosaurs have for dealing with the Ghellies, but I can't say too much now."

Bissette does note that although a series of eight mini-comics will help the reader to understand the world of the Archosaurs, the pair will add back-up pages to the regular-sized mini-series to clue fans in on Archosaur history.

"We call them 'Commandosaurs,' and

Steve Bissette's favorite, the wild Fett.



Demolitions expert Yog.

Underwater attacker Jawr'l.

it's obvious the idea's from dinosaurs, but when you really get into the story, they're not so much dinosaurs as some unique creature all their own," says Laird.

"They are dinosaurs, and they're not," continues Laird. "They have the appeal of dinosaurs, like they have big gnashing teeth and claws and tails and scales. But then again, they're different. They act differently. They have their own society, language and social mores."

"And by doing that," says Bissette, "we've been able to put many of our own attitudes into the story. Part of what attracted me to the project was the idea of presenting kids with these Commandosaurs, these gun-totin' things that play on the attraction all kids have for the military, and then coming up with a story that reverses the whole thing and makes kids realize that maybe the military's not so cool. In fact, one of the key plots hinges on the fact the Commandosaurs have been trained to believe the Terrorsaurs are their enemies and it turns out to be the furthest thing from the truth. But that's how the military works, you're just mobilizing these beings to be the government's arms and legs, to go out there and fight. And you don't tell them why they're in there, it's none of their business.

"There's this whole attitude that the further the generations are from the 200 year point when the Ghellies emerged, the less they believe in the Ghellies. And the less credibility there is for them, which is a metaphor for the Holocaust. We've got the neo-Nazis trying to get us to believe that it was a fabrication of Time-Life Books, that the concentration camps only existed there. We're not going to weigh the story down, and I'm not trying to say it's anything more than what it is, but if we can introduce ideas like that into fantasy, it may get kids thinking so that when they get older, it may give them something to bring to their lives."

"While we're having fun with the outfits and the guns and the goopy creatures, we're also trying to put a bit of a different spin on it to show things in a slightly different light," relates Laird. "Like Steve says, the Terrorsaurs look horrible, they're all teeth and claws and spines and nasty expressions. But when you get into the story, you find out that you can't judge a book by its cover. One of the Commandosaurs is nastier than any of the Terrorsaurs. He's a total psychotic."

Terrorsaurs. Trademark Stephen Bissette

Old Scab, like the rest of the Terrorsaurs, Bissette notes, no longer needs weapons.

The soaring saurian, Bishop.

Art: Copyright 1987, 1988, 1989 Peter A. Laird & Stephen R. Bissette

All Commandosaurs Art: Courtesy Stephen R. Bissette

Laird and Bissette are taking turns writing the characters with Bissette pencilling and Laird inking. They compare their team of Commandosaurs to those old war movies where each squad member had his own idiosyncrasies.

"It shows all the different types," Laird says. "But the part we've been able to play with is that some of them are female. So, it's not just this all-male bonding trip."

A high-flying female Ghellie.

Art: Stephen R. Bissette

Included in the *Commandosaur* squad are: Burg, the intelligent squad leader who wants to do things right with his team. Lilly, the communications expert who will be absent at the beginning but more important later. Fett, a "feral warrior" scout who likes to "strip down and fight." Bran, who Bissette refers to as the "creepiest of the squad," is their cynical and very secretive medico, much of whose story revolves around a special surgical glove she wears constantly. Cray, a pleisosaur volunteer in the Commandosaur's army, can fight on land or water if he uses his special half-track unit. Yog, who likes to blow things up, is "the James Coburn of the outfit," Bissette laughs. Bror, the muscle guy, Laird describes as "big, but very gentle, a good soldier who takes orders well." And Skeeter, the aerial warrior.

On the other side, at least for now, is Scab, who Laird calls the leader "or the shaman of the group." A very old Archosaur, he has a secret history which unfolds throughout the story. Rat Tank is a two-piece soldier: The shell is one person and the small creature inside is the second. Bishop has a religious bent, Bissette notes, "possibly from flying around and looking at everything from above so long." Jawr'l, who is probably the ugliest of the group and who gets the biggest and most teeth award. And Grif, who looks like a tank with as many spikes as can possibly fit all over him, is "a good foot soldier," Laird comments.

And then there are the Ghellies, nasty creatures who emerge every 200 years, covered in this gooey film, and for 16 to 24 hours, destroy everything in their path until their coating falls off and they have to return underground.

"They're quick and dirty," sneers Bissette.

But with *Dinosaurs for Hire*, *Dino-Riders*, *Dinosaucers* and the rest already grazing in the marketplace, aren't Bissette and Laird concerned about oversaturation?

"Neither Steve nor I believe that, because we believe the appeal of dinosaurs is eternal. They've been around since we were kids and before," says Laird. "The big difference is that there are no human beings in *Commandosaurs*.<In *Dino-Riders*, the dinosaurs are stupid. In *Dinosaurs for Hire*, they're somewhat intelligent, but the book still has humans."

"In *Dinosaucers*, well, they *all* have

(continued on page 52)

One of the berserk male drone Ghellies.

Commandosaurs & Ghellies ™ trademark Peter Laird

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The ghost with the most has a new haunt: Saturday mornings.

BEETLEJUICE

He loves to shock people. He's an anarchist. He's a movie star. He eats beetles. And now, he's a hero on Saturday morning!

Beetlejuice, that ghost with the most, amused audiences last year in the live-action movie directed by Tim Burton. But now that he has joined ABC's fall cartoon line-up, can his bizarre behavior be too warped for children's television?

According to the show's story editors, Tedd Anasti and Patsy Cameron, this was one series that was going to push the outside of the envelope.

"ABC has supported us all the way," Cameron says. "They want it to be crazy and they want it to be true to his character, the way he was in the movie. So, we had really strong support from them." As an example, she cites an episode that sold in one sentence: "We just told them Beetlejuice plays armpit music and they said, 'You have a sale.'"

"Everything is different where their star comes from," Anasti says. "Beetlejuice walks down a Shocking Mall and there are *handbags* that wiggle. They're bags, but they're body parts, really hands."

This occurs in the Neitherworld, which Anasti says is "neither here nor there." *Everything* is haunted in Beetlejuice's home dimension. Shopping malls are Shocking Malls, grocery stores are Gross-ery stores; servants are Serve Ants. In the Neitherworld, everyone hates Beetlejuice and wants to get rid of him.

"He's always trying to con them; he's taking their money; he's doing gross things," Cameron says. "And they're always trying to throw him in prison and feed him to the sandworms."

So, Beetlejuice makes regular visits

By BOB MILLER

to our world, where he has befriended the film's Lydia, now a pre-teenager (made younger by ABC) who loves spooky things.

She lives in a mundane household with parents who don't understand her and why she's interested in bizarre stuff. But Beetlejuice understands her, and they're best friends. Likewise, she's the only one who really likes Beetlejuice," Cameron says.

In our cartoon, we take up where the movie left off, and have them becoming friends. Our show doesn't really have any sexual innuendo. Beetlejuice and Lydia are just friends."

The series begins with the pair celebrating their first year of friendship. Cameron reveals that Lydia has learned to have fun in the movie, she was suicidal and depressed. She just loves to hang around with ghosts, and she's still into spooky things, but now she's having a great time going on adventures with him."

Other recurring things the series are Lydia's parents, Delia and Charles, whom Cameron describes as pretty much the same. We want to have a good family, even though they're weird.

"We're trying to make Delia a little warmer. Delia is still into her artwork that no one appreciates, that really stinks. Charles is always trying to relax. And both of them just try to explain the weird things that happen around the house. They don't know their daughter is best friends with Beetlejuice, so they would freak out."

Regarding this secret relationship, Cameron adds, "I think kids like to have their own little lies. You know, things that are their private place and their private little adventures. So, we have that appeal to kids."

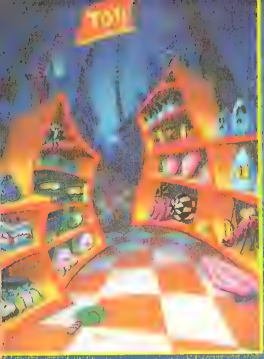
The cast is voiced by Stephen Ouimette as Beetlejuice, Ryan Stiles as Charles, Rowena Wiseman as Delia, and Elizabeth Hanna as Delia.

New characters include a weightlifting skeleton named Jacques LaLean (as in Jack LaLanne)—"Lean" because he's a skeleton and "Jacques" because he can't understand why his parents just gave him a name. Also a tap-dancing spider named Ginger, who's always showing everyone her latest routine. And then there's The Monster Across the Street.

"He's just this big grouchy monster, who comes over to ask favors, or to borrow something, or ask Beetlejuice to help out the [illegible]. But [illegible] can't really say no because this guy is so huge, he would just crush him, so he ends up always [illegible] to," Cameron says. "They just call him The Monster Across the Street; there's no other name for him."

Meanwhile, Lydia's favorite ghost will still be doing what he does best. "Sort of ways to keep him out of trouble, trying to keep people from the powers of dead ghosts and because he has to do crazy things to them," says Cameron. "And he still does that, especially in many authors' figures, in either the Neitherworld or the real world. He likes to 'Beetlejuice' them, get revenge, make them look stupid or put do something outrageous to them. But they're scary and they deserve it.

Cameron, once a clown and a sign language interpreter, started writing *Smurfs* in its first season. And, Anasti, who had been involved in advertising before writing for *The Jetsons*, graduated for the *Smurfs* second season. The following year both were promoted to story editor



Of course, there's a toy tie-in.

supervising the show for three seasons. In 1987, they won an Emmy Award for Best Children's Series, for an episode that introduced the first deaf character. Sons of animation [illegible] won them a Governor's Media Award for Excellence in Children's Programs.

After *Smurfs* came Disney's *Duck Tales*, for which Anasti and Cameron developed and story-edited (along with Jymn Magon) the initial 65 episodes. Both series earned them several awards, including five Emmy nominations.

While on *Duck Tales*, Anasti and Cameron made a fateful decision. "Our dream was to create our own shows," Cameron relates. "We could have stayed put at Disney and been really comfortable, but we wanted to try and make a break."

They took a job offer at Nelvana—the Toronto-based animation firm responsible for *The Ewoks/Droids Adventure Hour*, *Care Bears* and [illegible] as [illegible] idents of development. Their first assignment: an interview with Tim Burton (CS#8).

He and Warner Bros. were interviewing all the studios in town about *Beetlejuice* because ABC had made a commitment to air it and Warner needed a studio to produce it. We fell like underdogs, because Nelvana is not as well known as Hanna-Barbera or some of the other studios," Cameron says. So, we just went to [illegible] and we weren't really nervous. If we knew [illegible] was going to be to our careers, we probably would have been shaking.

In fact, STARLOG magazine was [illegible]

"When we went to pitch it to Tim [illegible] at the airport," Anasti recalls. "It had a big poster in the center with Beetlejuice [probably STARLOG POSTER MAGAZINE #1]. So, we just [illegible] show around what characters we were talking about to everybody. STARLOG helped us out."

Comments Cameron, "We just used that as an example of the way Beetlejuice would act. It inspired us to new heights of weirdness, because he had this really weird disgusting look [illegible] put us in the mood to act crazy."

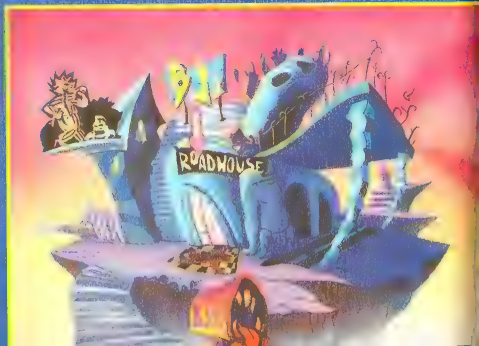
As it turned out, "We hit it off with Tim Burton and Warner Bros.," says Cameron. "We went in there with our ideas and everybody kept laughing. It was one of the best meetings they've ever had and we got it. So, we were really glad."

Although they didn't create *Beetlejuice*, the story editors feel [illegible] pregnating their own project. As Cameron states, "This time we got to be really involved with the development and work with Tim Burton. And if it goes on a second year, we'll also be producers, and just that experience, I hope, will also help us in selling some original concepts. It's a real thrill to see our original characters in the main title of *Beetlejuice*, like The Monster Across the Street, and the weightlifting skeleton.

Though he was busy filming a certain Caped Crusader, Tim Burton still kept watch over his ghoulish brainchild.

Tim's background is in animation, so I think he was really excited about having a show on Saturday morning, Cameron reveals. Whereas many

Having contributed to the comical concept, movie director Tim Burton will visit Beetlejuice's new animated digs with the episode "Quit While You're A Head."



The toon will introduce many new faces, among them Beetlejuice's folks.

people will hit movies might not care enough about cartoons to be involved, he has a real love for animation. He wants something as memorable as some of those old cartoons that were weird," citing *The Flintstones*, *Clutch Cargo* and *Gumby* as examples.

He did most of his work in the initial stages, when he was in London directing *Batman*. He would call us up, and we also went there twice to meet with him in London," Cameron says.

"Tim was involved in the pilot. He read the outline and made some comments, and he read the script and really liked it. He was involved in the concept's development and what the characters were going to be like." Burton also approved the show's designs and character models.

As for the movie sequel to [illegible], are fans concerned about conflicting storylines?

"No," Cameron says. "I'm hoping they'll be interested in or like some of what we did. I really have no idea what their plans are. Nobody has said, 'Don't do this, don't do that.'

to write the sequel.

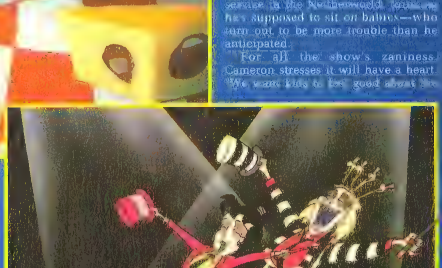
By shooting a script and episode, they had just viewed a rough cut of the pilot episode, "Critter Sitters," which [illegible] had been awaiting nervously.

"Usually, these rough cuts make everybody sick for a few days," says Anasti.

"We were writing such weird scripts, and until we saw it, we weren't sure we had nuts or were crazy. We just kept writing the crazy stuff and [illegible] We thought there's a point where you go over the edge. And then we saw the pilot, and it all came together and everybody liked it. It was like a rare event. Maybe it needed to be that way to know you're [illegible] so, it was a big relief to know that we weren't crazy." Cameron laughs.

In the episode Lydia gets a job babysitting to make money. Of course, Beetlejuice is concerned as the same thing. He opens a babysitting service in the Netherworld [illegible] has supposed to sit *on* babies—who turn out to be more trouble than he anticipated.

For all the show's zaniness, Cameron stresses it will have a heart. "We want kids to be good about the



Lydia and Beetlejuice get animated.

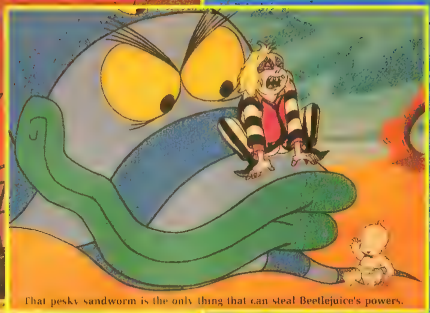
All Beetlejuice Animation Art © & ™ Courtesy Nelvana.

Anasti adds, "In the last episode that we've worked on (co-written with [illegible]), we meet Beetlejuice's parents, which sounds like something they *might* do in the next movie. And [illegible] when they see these copies, will have to flag it or debate. It [illegible] they don't see what characters [illegible]

friendship between Beetlejuice and Lydia, and feel that they would like to have Beetlejuice as their friend," she notes. "Lydia actually connects personal along with the craziness."

In "The Big Face Off," written by Peter Sauder (associate producer of [illegible] Adventures of Pete & Pete), Beetlejuice and Lydia enter a

All Beetlejuice Animation Art: Tridewood's Copyright 1998 & 2000 Productions



That pesky sandworm is the only thing that can steal Beetlejuice's powers.

Tim Burton shares a credit with [illegible] written by J.D. Smith) on a story called "Quit While You're a Head," in which Beetlejuice loses his head over a pretty ghoul, which is all part of a plot by island headhunters.

Are Beetlejuice's antics too wild for Saturday morning? ABC's children's programmers may [illegible] Standards and Practices division have provided some obstacles.

[illegible] because this show pushes the levels of outrageousness," Cameron says. "We always get notes from them and some things we fight for."

"For instance, the network wouldn't [illegible] on screen, anyway.

But, we don't want to cheat the kids, so Tim Burton—who was in on this—said, 'Why don't we play it up [illegible] beetle in the air and his teeth are [illegible] closer to his mouth, and then you cut away to someone reacting and you hear this huge, earth-shaking *CHRRUNNNCH!* And the person goes, 'Ewwww!' It's like he knows that the kids know that he wasn't allowed to eat it on camera, and so he really hams it up, and the crunch is like a really loud earthquake. Tim Burton helped us with that. He gave us the idea to use it to our advantage."

"Being in a later time slot is a big help," Cameron remarks, "because [illegible] their kids. We want the parents to be entertained, too. Because we're up against *Garfield*, which is pretty adult, and the *Smurfs*, too."

How does Patsy Cameron feel about competing against her old show?

"I hope we beat 'em," she says, and laughs. "They've been around long enough." Then, she adds, more seriously, "I *do* love the *Smurfs*. I would feel sad; I wouldn't want them to get cancelled. They can move to a different time slot."

Regarding their competition, Todd Anasti's comment is appropriate for a pal of Beetlejuice. "We think that any thing that's on opposite us is doomed. *Doomed!*"

stories (without commercials) and 14 10-minute stories.

One of Cameron's favorite episodes is "It's the Pits!" written by Evelyn Gabai, in which Beetlejuice discovers he can make incredible music with his armpits, and he and Lydia start a rock 'n' roll armpit band in the Neitherworld.

In "Out of My Mind," written by Therese Naugle, Beetlejuice is trying to forget about Lydia after they've had a fight, but can't. When he screams, "I can't get her out of my mind!", she magically appears inside his head and can't get out. There, she finds out why he is the way he is.

"There's all kinds of weird stuff going on inside his head," Cameron says. "Like there's a train of thought, and it's actually a big train, and there's Will Power, which is this little weak guy that has no will power at all. There's a Gross Factory that manufactures all of his gross ideas."

The Neitherworld which is "neither here nor there."

Pieces of the ROCK®

His stripes torn from his sleeve, Arnold Schwarzenegger reveals why he won't lead Easy Co. into combat.

By WILL MURRAY

Arnold Schwarzenegger *won't* enlist as *Sgt. Rock.*

Predator Plus! Zack Reese Terminates the Sgt. Rock Character. Trademark DC Comics Inc.

Arnold Schwarzenegger will not be playing DC's World War II Easy Company ramrod, Sergeant Rock. Schwarzenegger recently confirmed, relaxing outside his trailer on the Churubusco Studios lot in Mexico City where he is filming Tri-Star's summer 1990 SF blockbuster, *Total Recall*, the once and future Conan explains the circumstances that forced him to walk away from the Warner Bros. project even after the original David Peoples script had been rewritten by Steven de Souza (STARLOG #125) to take full advantage of his unique screen persona.

"*Sgt. Rock* never came about because originally when I made the deal, it was a movie that was to be done in Northern California or Oregon," Schwarzenegger reveals in his rich Austrian accent. "Then, all of a sudden, it changed. It could not be done there for that amount of money, and we had to go to Yugoslavia or Spain or Italy—something like that. I made it very clear to them that I could *not* do that. I only can do one movie away a year, and one I *have* to stay home for because otherwise I might as well hang my marriage up. That's why I got married—to be with Maria [Shriver]. Once a year, I go away."

Rock Hatton Art.

Courtesy Warner Bros.

For *Sgt. Rock*, Schwarzenegger was to reunite with his *Commando* producer, Joel (*Die Hard*) Silver, who continued to hold out for his first choice after Schwarzenegger bowed out of the project, but to no avail.

"What happened is that I just got back from *Red Heat*," Schwarzenegger elaborates. "Then, all of a sudden, they wanted me to go to Yugoslavia. I said, 'Forget it.' So, now they ask me, 'When can you do it next?' I say to them, 'I won't commit to anything. It's written, the script. It's ready to go and everything. And I say I can't commit because now I have a baby that comes in December and I've been away five months at this location [Mexico]. I would rather wait and do something in Los Angeles again. They said, 'Do you mind if we give it to someone else?' I said no. Joel Silver said that he has Bruce Willis that he would like to line up for it. I said that was fine with me."

Fans of the gaunt, hard-bitten and bestubbled Rock of Easy Company—who was created by writer Robert Kanigher and artists Ross Andru and Mike Esposito for *Our Army at War* in 1959—were puzzled over the contradiction of Austria-born Arnold Schwarzenegger playing such a quintessentially American character, but the actor notes that his accent was written into the script as a crucial energizing element of Rock's character.

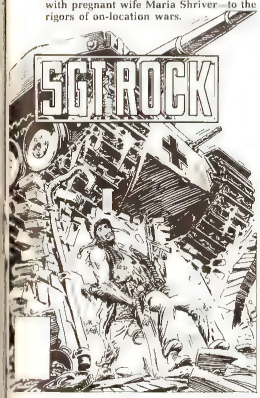
"All we had to do is just say that my father escaped from Germany way before—let's say in 1933—with me and the rest of the family," Schwarzenegger reveals. "And now I

Art: Joe Kubert©Copyright 1988 DC Comics Inc.

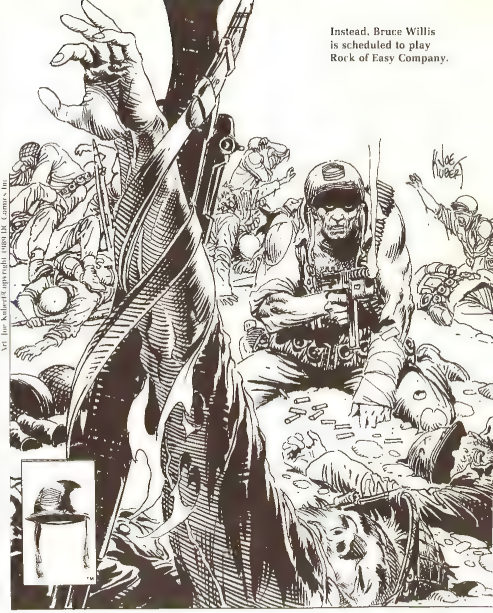
am in the military and that's where I have my German accent from. My father lived over there. We wrote it in such a way that we had some great scenes where I sneak into the German camps and have the German uniform on and speak perfect German and give orders—'Dah-dah-dah-dah'—and they look and they do everything because I have this *perfect* German accent." Schwarzenegger allows himself a broad smile before adding, "And then, of course, I kill them all as soon as they turn around. So, there were great things that we could write in that would work to our advantage here."

More than merely explain away Schwarzenegger-as-Rock's accent which the actor notes is often mistaken for German by American audiences, the plan was to take advantage of Rock's German parentage throughout the film.

"Much of this was built in the pay back time," he continues. "Because my family had to leave Germany, there was more inspiration there. So, that's why he is the Rock. He went out *beyond* his obligations to go kick ass. Everyone is always talking. 'The Rock is crazy. We haven't seen him for four days. He's *nuts*! I think he went beyond enemy lines. This is insane. Have you seen the Rock?' " Schwarzenegger shifts from a questioning character voice to a more authoritative one and goes on: " 'When the Rock does something, he really does it well,' and all this kind of thing. It's not because *I* am the Rock. The way we play it in the movie, it's because I have this hostility towards this crazy Adolph Hitler who I want to wipe out. So, it was extra motivation. That was the idea behind it."



Schwarzenegger prefers staying home—with pregnant wife Maria Shriver—to the rigors of on-location wars.



Instead, Bruce Willis is scheduled to play Rock of Easy Company.

While Joel Silver may have lost the opportunity to work with Schwarzenegger on *Sgt. Rock*, he's also planning to bring another DC project to the screen, and he has earmarked still another larger-than-life comics character for Schwarzenegger. Responding to Silver's suggestion in COMICS SCENE #1 that Silver wants to paint Schwarzenegger blue and cast him as Dr. Manhattan in *Watchmen*, Schwarzenegger is noncommital.

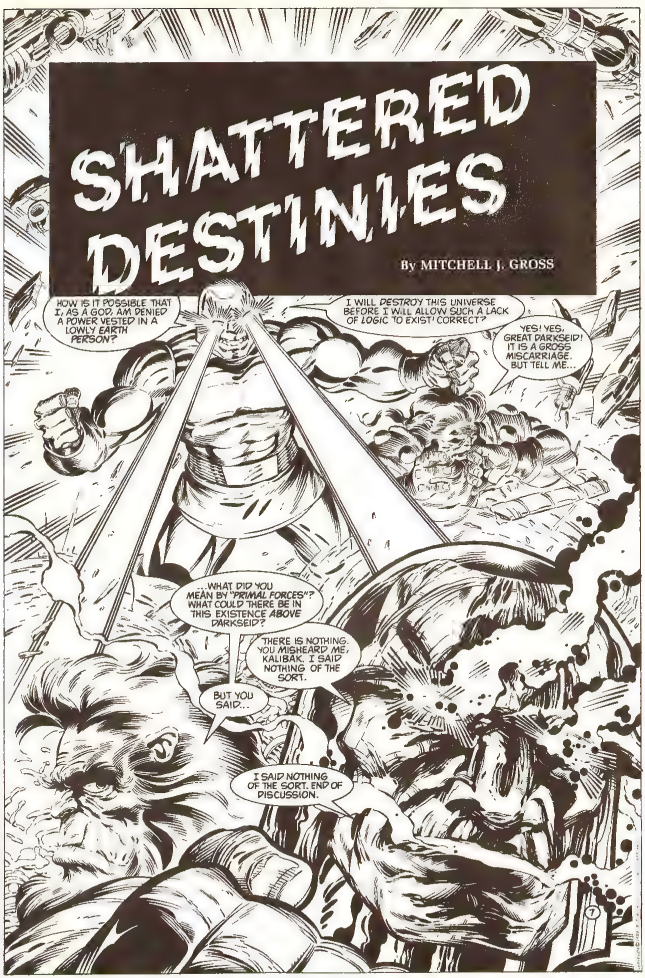
"I am not familiar with it but I heard him talk about it," the actor admits. "I would have to read it. I know that comic-book characters are now the big thing. If I read it and it looks interesting, I do it. [Doing a movie] really has to do with if it's unique and if people will talk about it, that we can create an event with it. I'm more interested in doing something that really has an impact all over the world rather than sneak out a little movie."

While Schwarzenegger ponders the opportunity to bring a truly unique comic-book character to life, two of his most popular films have recently become comic books. Now Comics is doing *Terminator*, and earlier this year, Dark Horse released its *Predator* mini-series. Neither comic book features Schwarzenegger's famous likeness. Consequently, he hasn't paid them much attention.

"I've not noticed *Terminator*," Arnold Schwarzenegger candidly admits. "I've seen some of the things on *Predator*. It looked OK. I mean, it's great if the character in the movie was so appealing that people want to read a monthly magazine on it. It's terrific. I like that. Also from the business sense. I like it. But, it doesn't mean that much to me one way or the other."

SHATTERED DESTINIES

By MITCHELL J. GROSS


HOW IS IT POSSIBLE THAT I, AS A GOD, AM DENIED A POWER VESTED IN A LOWLY EARTH PERSON?
I WILL DESTROY THIS UNIVERSE BEFORE I WILL ALLOW SUCH A LACK OF LOGIC TO EXIST! CORRECT?
YES! YES, GREAT DARKSEID! IT IS A GROSS MISCARRIAGE. BUT TELL ME...
...WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY "PRIMAL FORCES"? WHAT COULD THERE BE IN THIS EXISTENCE ABOVE DARKSEID?
THERE IS NOTHING YOU MISHEARD ME, KALIBAK. I SAID NOTHING OF THE SORT.
BUT YOU SAID..
I SAID NOTHING OF THE SORT. END OF DISCUSSION.

All New Gods Art, Paris Cullins/Copyright 1989 DC Comics Inc

IN A WORLD WHICH UNIVERSITY ARCHIVIST THE ANCIENTS, THE FOUNDERS OF NEW GENESIS, RECOGNIZED AND BUILDING OF FOR THEMSELVES A PAST.
OH, YES, I REMEMBER HIM. MAN, WHATEVER HAPPENED TO HIM? WHERE'D HE GO? AND WHOA! SCARY WITH UNDOUBTABLE POWER! I'M GLAD THEY'RE ON OUR SIDE!
AND OUT THE CRACK EVER WIDENING, THE FIRE OF HELL ITSELF FOR EVERLASTING PUNISH!
BUT I WAS LOOKING FOR A PLACE TO HIDE! NOT TO GET CAUGHT!
AND, PERHAPS, JUST OF A PLACE TO REST! I WAS EXHAUSTED TO THE VERY LIMITS OF THOUGHT AND FEELING! I WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE A FUGITIVE!
I'D LOST THE ONE PERSON I'D EVER LOVED! I'D LOST MY FAMILY! I'D LOST MY HOME! I'D LOST EVERYTHING!
I'D LOST MY WORLD!
DO NOT TRY TO ESCAPE! THERE'S NOW ONEPHONE WHO CAN TEAR YOU APART! ONE WHO CAN DO IT TWICE AS WELL!
CONTROL
This is Apokolips now. It's a dreary place, a planet that exists to make war.

I don't think *anyone* has been too happy with many of the depictions of Darkseid, et al, the last few years," says Mark Evanier, the man who now controls the destinies of the *New Gods*. "It does happen in this business, deadlines and demand for product being what they are, that comics get done and then the company or the editors go, 'Uh oh, we're botching these characters up.' And then someone has to do some course-correction on them. That has happened to some extent on *every* comic or character that has been passed from creator to other hands."

Evanier speaks from experience. After working with Jack Kirby on the original *New Gods* in the early '70s, he watched as the King's characters were mishandled and eventually turned into "everyday superheroes" following Kirby's departure from DC. Evanier was recently called in to work with artist Paris Cullins on a new *New Gods* series that has picked up where Jim Starlin's *Cosmic Odyssey* mini-series (CS #4) left off.

"Ever since Jack Kirby did the original, there have been fans salivating to see more of those characters and a great many writers and artists anxious to comply. That's why Darkseid and the world of New Genesis has never long been out of comics. I had spoken intermittently to DC over the years about a new series, one that would resemble Kirby's intentions a bit closer than some of the variants that had been done, but we were never able to come to a creative understanding until recently."

One of the problems with the series has always been setting it in current DC continuity. Evanier has decided to ignore many of the post-Kirby stories as they contradicted not only each other but Kirby's work as well. The new series, a few early issues of which were written by Jim Starlin, immediately follows *Cosmic Odyssey*, and according to Evanier, will be wrapping up some loose ends from that series. Evanier places Jack Kirby's own *Hunger Dogs* graphic novel, in which the world of New Genesis is destroyed, in the future of the New Gods.

Another major consideration since their creation says Evanier, has been connecting Kirby's characters with the rest of the mainstream DC universe. "Jack created Morgan Edge and intended him to be an agent of Darkseid planted in a big corporation. And when Jack devised this, the other folks at DC said, 'No, no! You can't have that.' So in *Lois Lane*, which was then being published, they hurriedly did a storyline about Morgan Edge being cloned and an evil Morgan Edge being planted in the *Daily Planet* organization so they could declare that the Morgan Edge depicted in Jack's story wasn't the *real* Morgan Edge." Several upcoming crossovers, he notes, should correct this problem.

On the new series, Evanier and Cullins share much of the plotting responsibilities. "Paris is a very clever, very story-minded artist and he has many good ideas so we're co-plotting most of it. He did the plotting of the first issue and then I'm doing the bulk of the plot work on our current storyline, though he will doubtlessly have more to do with other issues."

For his own part, Evanier enjoys writing nearly all of the New Gods. "I love *all* the characters," he confesses. "I

Is there a power greater than Darkseid, "the best villain in comics"?

was working with Jack when most of them were created and I made suggestions, input about them. Orion is our star and he's the most interesting character . . . with the possible exception of Darkseid. There is an interesting conflict bubbling within Orion, him being part of two warring worlds at the same time, and it's fascinating to explore this since we all at times feel pulled in different directions by our birthrights and our logic.

"Darkseid is, to me, the best villain in the comic-book world and I enjoy writing scenes for him. Jack took everything in the world that had ever troubled him and fashioned it into *one* character named Darkseid. He is ever so much more than a character who merely wants to conquer the universe. I did a *Mr. Miracle Special* with Steve Rude some time ago in which we did a portrait of Darkseid that I think said much about the character in ways that comics usually don't depict evil. I like Lightray, I like Metron, I like 'em all, really. Any I don't, I leave out. The Black Racer is probably my least favorite character in the mythos, but I recognize his function in the drama so he turns up."

To Evanier, the characters all serve specific functions. For example, he notes, "Metron represents a dispassionate look at all this, basically. He is the side of us that is outside the window, looking in. Lightray represents New Genesis in its truest form—innocent and optimistic. Highfather represents the wisdom of the past as applied to today. And I think we all know what Darkseid represents."

Still, it is Orion that Evanier feels is not only the series' central character, but the one that the readers may empathize with the most. "We all go through life constantly searching for new roles and new identities in new surroundings. You know, you wake up one morning and realize, 'Hey, I'm not that jerky 13-year-old I used to be anymore.' You may be a jerky adult, instead. But, you find yourself changing and that always involves a certain amount of torment, searching for some anchor, some sense of stability in your new surroundings. I have, many times, had to cope with leaving some facet of my past life behind, accepting the new. If you look at Orion, that is what he does, only on a more cosmic scale. He was born in Apokolips, born the son of maybe the most powerful being who has ever lived. But, he has left all that behind, renounced it for something better . . . but perhaps not fully. He is *constantly* torn by the image of who he should be, given his birthright, and he has this fiery temper that crystallizes everything in him into life and death issues and forces him to take stands on them because of his power. He really is a guy forced to constantly make world-altering decisions."

Much of Evanier's work and thoughts on *New Gods* is derived from his long relationship with their creator. "I've known Jack Kirby for 20 years. I've been through wars with him, personal battles, problems, everything. He's like an uncle to me and I think the world of him and his creations. For about two years, I was kind of an apprentice/assistant to Jack, working with him on the original *New Gods*. I was around when the characters were conceived and spent many long hours discussing them with Jack. Since that time, I have never cared for anything that anyone else has done with the characters—not because they weren't talented but because they were pulling those characters into directions that I felt were inappropriate for them, sometimes horribly so. I feel a natural sense of possessiveness creatively about them and, while I would be quite pleased if no one but Kirby had ever done them, I feel that if they're going to be done, I oughta do 'em so that they don't drift too far from their creator's intentions." In fact, Evanier states that in Kirby's opinion, New Gods stories written by anyone

(continued on page 52)

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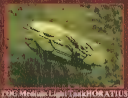
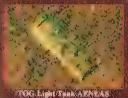


TOG Medium Light Tank HORATIUS

Renegade Medium Tank LIBERATOR



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BATGIRL CASEBOOK

Yvonne Craig drop-kicked evildoers alongside a Caped Crusader.

By KYLE COUNTS

Art: Carmine Infantino

If anyone had told Yvonne Craig at 14 that she would one day forsake her association with the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo in favor of an acting career that would find her playing a caped crimefighter who drove a purple Yamaha trimmed in lace, she would no doubt have questioned that person's sanity. But hang up her dancing shoes the brunette ballerina did, paving the way for her role as Batgirl, the sexy superheroine who clobbered the likes of Milton Berle, Cliff Robertson and Rudy Vallee on ABC's *Batman*.

The once-trim cover girl figure has filled out with the passing of time, but at 52, Craig still radiates the kind of beauty the years do not dull. It can still be seen in her sparkling green eyes and heard in her hearty laugh. She clearly enjoys reliving the memories associated with being part of one of television's most enduring phenomena, one that shows no sign of slowing down with the nationwide syndication of the 1966-68 series and

All Batman characters, trademarks & copyrights 1966 DC Comics, Inc.

the release of the Tim Burton-directed feature based on Bob Kane's Dark Knight. Having just seen the film, she is anxious to share her thoughts about the *Batman* movie.

I went prepared to enjoy it, and I did," says Craig, relaxing in her spacious Santa Monica, California apartment overlooking the ocean. "Jack Nicholson was fine as the Joker, but I thought his was a very one-dimensional, comic-strip kind of portrayal. I'll tell you, though: I will go to see *Batman* Parts Two through 10, as long as Michael Keaton plays Batman. He made Batman a complicated, interesting, charming character—and I thought he was *wonderful*. Adam [West] is going to be very upset."

As for the film's tone, Craig says, "The series was the aberration; the new movie is closer to what the original Batman was like than we ever were. We were bright and light and very much of the 60s. The movie is very much of its time in that it's very dark." In fact, it may have been a little *too* dark for Craig, but not in terms of its mood. "In the final fight between the Joker and Batman in the belfry, I couldn't see who was doing what to whom. That part of it was dark, but not dark in a somber way—just not well lit," she laughs.

Would she have wanted to be part of the new *Batman*? "Sure. But if I had been the producer, I wouldn't have wanted any of the old cast within 50 yards of the movie. Otherwise, you would immediately think it was going to be a laughy, campy, jokey movie—and it isn't. If that's not what they were trying to do, however, they *were* going to make it a laughy, campy, jokey movie, they might have used us in cameo roles—like me as a meter maid. [In an announcer's voice:] What happens to old crimefighters? They're writing parking tickets!" Or if they wanted to touch on the women's lib angle, I could have been a lady police commissioner, since I used to be the commissioner's daughter. It would have been fun."

Batgirl, comments Craig, "ended up being this cute little bland character when she could have been more in the style of Katharine Hepburn."

Winning the role of Barbara Gordon—by day, a straight-laced librarian, by night, a free spirit who assisted Batman and Robin in their ongoing battle against evil—was a godsend to Craig, who at the time was looking for a TV series. When contacted about the part, she was delighted to know that she would be reunited with two acquaintances from her work in episodic television, the show's executive producer William Dozier and line producer Howie Horwitz.

"Bill [Dozier] had called me in years before and asked me to do a pilot for *My Sister Eileen*. Howie had done 114 hours of prime time TV—he was the Aaron Spelling of his time. So, they both knew me. It wasn't like my agent said, 'How about Yvonne Craig for the part?' and they said, 'Who?' In the interim, I heard that Mary Ann Mobley was supposed to have been up for it and they chose me instead, but I don't know if that was a publicity thing or not."

Since her interest in literature as a child didn't include comics, Craig was unaware of both Batman the comic-book character and the TV series. When her sister told her about the show, she sniffed, 'I think television should be more uplifting." When she first spoke with Dozier, Craig was forced to admit that she had never watched *Batman*. She agreed to spend the summer looking at reruns so she would know how Batgirl would fit into the program.

"I was cast because they knew I moved well, and I looked the part physically," says Craig. "Both of them knew my work, so they knew I was a competent actress. The bonus was that I could ride a motorcycle."

As Horwitz explained in an interview with *TV Guide* at the time, Batgirl was being introduced to "freshen up the show. Girls over eight need...a big girl to identify with."

Batgirl's mask wasn't the only thing changed between her "pilot" and the series. Her modified motorcycle was altered as well.

For more on Batgirl, Yvonne Craig's career and her Star Trek *guest stint, see the companion interview with Craig in STARLOG #149 on sale now.*

"There was something happening between Batgirl and Batman [Adam West] in the presentation film that got lost in the shuffle," bemoans Craig.

Others speculated that the show was in trouble –it ran twice weekly in its first two seasons and was cut back to a single night in season number three—and that Craig was being brought aboard to add a touch of sexiness to the proceedings.

"Mr. Dozier and Howie told me that the character was aimed at a pre-pubescent female audience and an over-40 male audience. Now, I understood the over-40 part, but I wasn't certain that they had their finger on the pulse of pre-pubescent females. I figured that pre-pubescent girls probably thought Robin was cute, or else they had a crush on Batman and would resent my character.

'It turned out that they were right. Whenever I did public appearances, it was the little girls who came up to me. Once one of them said to me, 'Miss Craig, from now on, every time I see someone kicked in the face, I'll think of you.' I know she meant it as a compliment, but I was horrified.'

Kicking thugs in the face or knocking them over the head with breakaway objects was as tough as Batgirl was allowed to be, since Horwitz was insistent Craig *not* be modeled after Honey West (Anne Francis) or *The Avengers*' Emma Peel (Diana Rigg), two contemporary TV heroines he felt were lacking in femininity.

'Howie was a funny man," recalls Craig. "He had a wife and three daughters, and he wanted them all to be very feminine. So, he specifically said that Batgirl was not to do any karate, kung fu, any sort of martial arts-type stuff. That wasn't ladylike to him. I was allowed to kick the bad guys in a sort of high-kick, ballet manner—my ballet training *really* came in handy—or spin into them and waste them, but I was supposed to be able to sneak out of their grasp before any punches were thrown. Consequently, I had an easier time talking Howie into letting me do my own stunts.'

Before Batgirl was added to *Batman*'s roster of characters, she was unveiled as part of a 15-minute presentation film made for ABC executives. For the film, Craig wore a mask with pointed edges that left marks on her cheeks and 'made me look as though I had been crying for a week." (It was modified for the series.) She recalls vividly what happened on the day of filming. "I was terribly excited about going to work. I woke up, rushed to the bathroom—and promptly slammed my foot into a chair and broke my little toe. Since it was understood that I was going to be doing my own

Batgirl Art: Carmine Infantino/Copyright 1966 National Periodical Publications Inc.

stunts on the show. I was told that I was to jump through a candy glass window as part of this presentation film. I did the stunt on the first take, and the stunt supervisor was so happy for me that he ran over to hug me—and stepped on my broken toe!

"As I was getting dressed to change into the Barbara Gordon character, Howie, who felt that I *shouldn't* be doing my own stunts, looked and saw that I was purple up to my ankle. And he figured I did it doing the stunt; there was no convincing him otherwise. So, he told me they were going to hire a stunt girl for me, which they did—for *two* segments. She got another job and I went back to doing what I wanted to do."

In the presentation film, according to Craig, Batgirl was a "little saucier," she had a touch of Eve Arden. She wasn't exactly condescending to Batman, but she had a 'I'm better able to do things than you are' attitude, treating him as if he were less than capable and finding it amusing. He was also somewhat sexy; he appealed to her."

The sparks generated between Batgirl and Batman in the presentation film were never explored in the series' third (and final) season—a case of too many characters competing for screen time, Craig believes. "Between Adam and Burt Ward and me and Alan Napier [as the butler, Alfred] and my father [Neil Hamilton as Commissioner Gordon] and the police chief [Stafford Repp] and the guest star, if they just said hello to one another, you filled up a half-hour. My relationship with Batman became more one-dimensional, which was OK, since it was a comic book."

Doing her own stunts included riding the customized Yamaha that served as her Batgirlcycle, a handful to maneuver due to its weight. "That thing weighed about 350 pounds," Craig explains with a grimace. "When I got it off its center of gravity, I would have to drop it and pick it up because I wasn't strong enough to wrestle it back to its upright position. Because the shocks had to be taken off to accommodate all the customizing, whenever I hit a pebble, it was like jumping stiff-legged off a table."

In one episode, Craig was supposed to topple a wall leading from her alter-ego's apartment -made of mock brick that lowered like a drawbridge. Only when it came time for a take, the wall failed to lower, and she came close to crashing the motorcycle through it. (Luckily, she hit the brakes in time.) Incident number two occurred during the filming of an episode starring Vincent Price as Egghead. In the scene, Craig was directed to stop the bike at Egghead's

Star Trek Photo: Copyright 1968 Paramount Pictures & Norman Craig

Maybe as a green Orion slave girl in "Whom Gods Destroy," Craig could titillate *Star Trek*'s Captain Kirk, but actually working under all that makeup "was just hideous."

Cora, Photo: Courtesy Yvonne Craig

"When we were doing *Batman*, it was just a job," recalls Yvonne Craig. "I didn't know I would still be talking about Batgirl 20 years later."

feet, but instead, it lurched forward "like a rabbit" and ran over the actor's instep. Price's immediate reaction to an embarrassed Craig: "Had I known we were going to do it this way, I would have shouted *ole!*" She sent him a bottle of Dom Perignon the next day with a note that read: "If you don't want to drink it, soak your foot in it."

Working on *Batman*, which Craig remembers in "wonderful, glowing terms," gave her a golden opportunity to work with performers she might not otherwise have met. "If it hadn't been for *Batman*, I would probably have never worked with Milton Berle [Louie the Lilac], Ethel Merman [Lola Lasagne] and Burgess Meredith [the Penguin]," she explains. The only sourpuss guest star she dealt with was Rudy Vallee, who played Lord Ffogg. "He was a pain in the butt," she remarks, bellowing with laughter. "God! He was such a churl! He was this little old cranky man. He didn't interact with anyone, and when he did, all he could manage was a snarl. And he did a three-parter, so it was like we were *never* going to get rid of him."

Despite the addition of Batgirl to the show, the bloom was off the rose for *Batman*. The show's ratings continued to slide, even against its less-than-formidable competition. *Cimarron Strip*, a Western toplining Stuart Whitman, and *Daniel Boone*, starring Fess Parker. Was she aware the show was

(continued on page 65)

Can graphic adaptations be educational? You can Bank on it.

Classroom Comics

By MARK ALTMAN

Considering the common perception of comics by some adults these days, it should come as no small surprise that the Bank Street College of Education, a respected leader in the field of children's education, has teamed with Byron Preiss Visual Publications and Pocket Books to produce a series of "educationally enriched" comic adaptations of classic short stories for use in and out of the classroom.

"It's a monster, monster project," says Howard Zimmerman, a former editor of STARLOG and the original COMICS SCENE, who now serves as one of the editors on the four-volume series: *Creepy Tales, Fantasy, Science Fiction* and *Mystery*. "The four books contain more than 700 pages of story and art, 50 different stories.

"They're designed so that they can be an individual reading experience—a child going one-on-one with the printed page. And because there are thought-provoking questions at each story's end, it can also be used in a directed lesson in a formal group class setting or in the home."

In its intended role as an enticement to involve reluctant readers in the world of literature, the books showcase the work of numerous talented artists including Alex Nino, Russ Steffens, Fred Lere and Walter Velez who painted the covers.

But it is the writers whose stories have been adapted that will catch most of the attention. Among them are Edgar Allan Poe, H.G. Wells, Jack London, Andre Norton, Algernon Blackwood, Brian Aldiss, Leigh Brackett, Isaac Asimov, Keith Laumer, Clifford D. Simak, O. Henry and Fredric Brown.

"When I came aboard, stories had already been chosen for the SF volume," Zimmerman recalls. "A few stories had been chosen for *Fantasy* and none for the rest, so the first task was to work with the editor at Bank Street on picking the right stories, which meant the proper balance between classics and modern tales."

Some stories, like Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment," were in the public domain. More recent yarns presented greater difficulties.

"We weren't looking to do stories that were all 100 years old," says Zimmerman. "We also wanted to let the kids who read the books be ex-

BUT ON THE THIRD NIGHT, SURE ENOUGH, A STRANGE, BLUE-HAIRED VEEGLIAN CREPT INTO KIG'S ROOM.
HERE, HERE, IT IS BEATING OF HIS HIDEOUS HEART!
Art: Ken Dr

Damon Knight's "Eripmav" provides a punny ending.

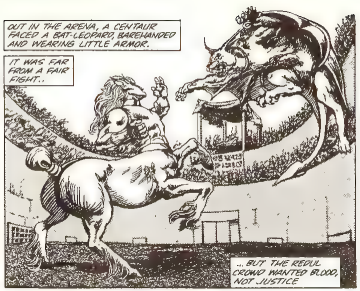
Art: Valerie Jones, Ken Hooper & Chris Schenck

Anne McCaffrey closely monitored this adaptation of "The Smallest Dragonboy."

"It's a monster, monster project," says Howard Zimmerman.

THE CREATURE'S BREATH STANK OF DEATH, AND I WAS ABOUT TO LOSE MY MIND COMPLETELY...
Art: Robin Smith & Gary Kato
"THE WAY IN REMARK CON

All Art: Copyright 1989 Byron Preiss Visual Publications Inc.


OUT IN THE ARENA, A CENTAUR FACED A BAT-FLICKERS BAREHANDED AND WEARING LITTLE ARMOR.
IT WAS FAR FROM A FAIR FIGHT..
.. BUT THE REPUL CROWD WANTED BLOOD, NOT JUSTICE

Art: Lara Sherman Treviño & Leslie Smirlbergh

Brian W. Aldiss' "In the Arena" shows the value of cooperation in an SF setting.

Rick Geary's vision of "The Tell-Tale Heart" required some revision.

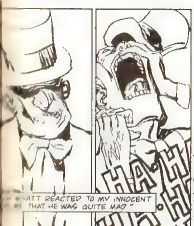
THE OLD BROOK STREET LODGINGS OF SHERLOCK JONES, DETECTIVE
WHATS ON IS IT RAINING?
DEVILISHLY CLEVER, JONES! HOW DID YOU KNOW?
DRIP DRIP
DRIP DRIP
DRIP DRIP

Art: Bob Layendi

Zimmerman hopes that the adaptations will prompt readers to pursue the literary originals.

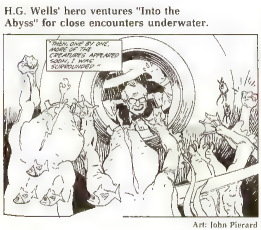
Readers will meet Andre Norton's "Teddi" in *Science Fiction.*

Mystery includes an adaptation of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Oblong Box."



Art: John Pierard

H.G. Wells' hero ventures "Into the Abyss" for close encounters underwater.



Art: John Pierard

posed to authors who are alive and writing. Hopefully, we'll get some readers to pursue more stories by a particular author.

"The logistics were enormous. We had to pitch the stories and get all of them approved by Bank Street and Simon & Schuster [Pocket Books' parent company]. Most authors who had no contact with the world of comics had never thought of their work being adapted in this way. We also didn't have much money to offer. If we had to pay what would be a legitimate license fee in the book world, we couldn't have produced these volumes. We offered what amounted to honoraria, and most people were kind enough to say that's fine.

"We did a David (*First Blood*) Morrell story, 'The Good Times Always End,' for *Mystery*. He wasn't so enamored, as it turned out, with licensing his short story for a comic adaptation. But I worked with the scripter on that and we used as much of his prose as possible basically because it worked. When he saw our script adaptation, he was very pleased with it and we had no problem getting him to sign."

Sorting through the myriad of potential material available was no easy task, even for an avid reader like Zimmerman, who is pleased with the diversity and richness of the books' final selections.

"We didn't just go for names, we went for *quality*," Zimmerman remarks. "We did manage to get in the *Fantasy* volume an Anne McCaffrey short story from her dragon universe. It was a long negotiation; Anne lives in Ireland, and she was very particular about how her dragon world is portrayed. In order to get her cooperation, we did give her final say on the text and art. She's the only author in the series we accorded that privilege and it was because of her deep concern over her characters."

Every story was carefully monitored. Both Bank Street and publisher Simon and Schuster stood ready to pull the plug on any material they deemed inappropriate for young readers.

"In a very few cases, less than a half-dozen art changes were called for and made," Zimmerman reveals. One such instance was on the final panel of Rick Geary's adaptation of Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." "Rick went for a great graphic. Zimmerman explains, "a close-up on the ripped up floorboards with the disembodied heart pumping out. The editors at Bank Street 86'ed that panel. We had a long discussion and I agreed. We went with an alternative drawing because

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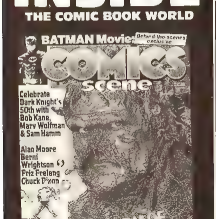
INSIDE
THE COMIC BOOK WORLD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Gods

(continued from page 44)

other than he or Evanier, simply do not exist, and furthermore, that Kirby is quite pleased with Evanier and Cullins' work.

What now concerns *New Gods* fans is the book's current six-part series-within-a-series. "'Bloodline' is kind of the Apokoliptian *Roots*. It's Orion journeying through the bowels of his birth-world, trying to find a piece of himself, in particular, his mother, but in a larger sense, he's looking for himself. He voyages through Armagetto and the underside of Darkseid's world and comes to grips with his hatred for Darkseid. It goes to the heart of what the series is all about and redefines the Orion/Darkseid relationship."

Many more events are forthcoming in the title, including greater involvement with DC's other, more Earthly heroes. "Len Wein is presently writing *Mister Miracle* and we're trying to set up a crossover, once we both get disengaged from current storylines," notes Evanier. "We will have many interactions with the rest of the DC world but in a manner which doesn't end with the characters too fully into it. You see, one of the things I believe is that a god, even a New God, is not just another superhero, which is the attitude some of my predecessors have had. A god is someone special, someone who functions in a different reality. Gods and mortals don't hang out at Burger King together, and both Paris and I want to make that clear.

"Everyone understands that in mythology, gods occupied a higher order of reality. They're a breed apart, unbound by most mortal constraints. We have a confrontation looming with Superman in which I hope we can explain the difference between a demi-god and a new god. There is also looming, a storyline about Lightray and his forbidden relationship with a mortal. It will be a godlike romance comic for one month; that's about all I can say." The subplot dealing with a possible civil war in New Genesis will also continue to grow.

Obviously, the writer has put a great deal of time into considering the relationship between man and gods. "There's a link between Man and gods. Without one, you cannot have the other. New Genesis could not exist without Earth. Earth is the battleground but not just in a physical sense. There's also a spiritual sense. One of the things Darkseid does not and cannot understand is that a physical victory is meaningless without a spiritual victory. You can steal a man's body, but you cannot steal his soul. New Genesis is fueled by the optimism and belief of Earth in a higher order, in a sense of selfless decency." Says Mark Evanier, "That is the purpose that gods have always served in Earth mythology."

Commandosaurs

(continued from page 32)

restrictive things with dinosaurs," Bissette notes. "In science-fiction films, there is that interactive element. And you basically have three prototypes. You have the 'Lost World,' which is all *King Kong* was, a variation on that, where human beings go through a previously unexplored area and find prehistoric monsters. The second premise is the monster-that-thaws-out-and-attacks-the-city movie—*Godzilla, The Beast From 20,000 Fathoms*. And the third is the time travel story which has never been done better than 'A Sound of Thunder,' the Ray Bradbury story. Those are the three prototypes into which dinosaurs are plugged. The reason we hit it off so quickly that afternoon was because we knew this was something *different*. We were approaching it as Frank Herbert did with *Dune* where he just created this whole ecosystem and there were no other concerns except what the ramifications were of the system."

Dinosaurs, although extinct, are eternal. And their popularity may be at an all-time high. "We've seen in the last couple of years an incredible outpouring of dinosaur stuff—cartoons, towels, things for kids. That's a reflection that dinosaurs have always been fascinating. You take any kid to a museum and what do they freak out the most at? The big models of dinosaurs. There also seems to be much more going on in the world of paleontology," continues Laird.

"They've discovered hundreds of new kinds of prehistoric life just in the last 15 years," pipes in Bissette, "with wilder forms than anything that has been reconstructed before. And the whole revisionist realization that birds and dinosaurs are really intertwined and that dinosaurs may not have just had scales, but feathers or hair. And there's a large resurgence in the adult interest in dinosaurs. Part of the adult interest came out of those new discoveries and the fact that as a species we've grown up being nuclear babies and we realize, 'Hey, *we* can go extinct.' It has made us look at the dinosaurs in an entirely new light."

For now, though, extinction isn't the focus as Bissette and Laird continue their collaboration.

Remarks Peter Laird, "I'm glad it happened. And I don't think it would have happened if I hadn't gone to talk to Steve. But I can't stress how much it has been improved by having Steve be part of it. Someday, we'll publish my original idea and we'll all have a good laugh. We just want to make a comic that's fun to read and have fun doing it."

"It's possible to do a comic that appeals to young and older readers and just has such a good story that it involves an adult world," says Steve Bissette. "It's one from the heart."

Inside ARKHAM ASYLUM

By CARR D'ANGELO

The inmates have taken over the asylum. It's a saying overused to describe anarchy and mayhem, and so, the phrase's menace has worn away. But, imagine the asylum is the Arkham Hospital for the Criminally Insane and the inmates are the deadliest madmen with the darkest psychoses. Imagine the Joker, Two-Face and others. Now imagine you're Batman, the target of their hate and fear and rage, and you've agreed to spend one night in this hellish prison of the mind. Suddenly, the cliche takes on new meaning and once more breathes threatening life. The inmates have taken over the asylum. Will anyone get out alive?

The answer can be found in *Arkham Asylum*, a 120-page hardcover graphic novel written by Grant Morrison and painted by Dave McKean that takes an in-depth look at the holding tank for Batman's most over-the-edge enemies. According to Karen Berger, the book's editor, "The story is told on two levels. On the more obvious level, the inmates of Arkham, with the Joker as their leader, take the doctors and nurses hostage and threaten to kill them unless Commissioner Gordon sends in Batman. Of course, Batman agrees. They release the other hostages and trap Batman inside where he's driven to the edge of his sanity. He has to make his way through the asylum while being confronted with various psychological problems."

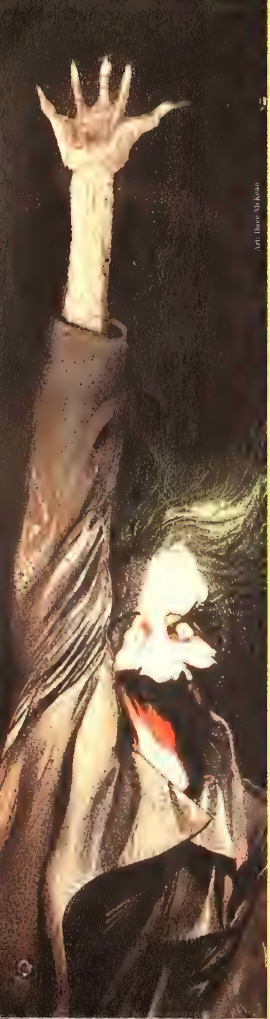
On another level, it is the history of Arkham Asylum—through the diary of its founder, Amadeus Arkham. "The diary chronicles Arkham's life as a child and how his mother was really flipped out," explains Berger. "Arkham went into psychiatry because his mother was so crazy. He wanted to help this person who was so close to him. He was very rich, and he turned his house into the asylum. Eventually, Arkham goes mad.

"This is the best thing Grant has written," the editor notes. "There's some great symbolism that figures both in the main story with the Joker and with Amadeus Arkham's scenes. In the plotting, the symbolism and thematic connection, it's a very intricate work. It's *much* more than the inmates take over the asylum with Batman stuck inside."

Although the novel seems to exploit the current wave of Batmania, the project actually started almost three years ago after then-DC publisher Jenette Kahn appointed Berger British Liaison Editor. Kahn, Berger and DC Vice-President Dick Giordano flew to England in February 1987 to meet with British talent and develop new projects. During this trip, Berger met writers Neil Gaiman and Grant Morrison and artist Dave McKean. "I had read some of Grant's stuff in *2000 A.D.* and thought it had some promise," recalls Berger. "Alan Moore had also recommended him.

"I asked them all to pitch ideas because we were looking for new projects. Grant pitched both *Animal Man* and *Arkham Asylum* to me then. The

Art: Dave McKean Arkham Asylum ©1989 DC Comics Inc.



Art: Dave McKean

"It's hard to write a sanitized story about insanity and madness," explains editor Karen Berger.

basic ideas were rough, but I said I would work with him on proposals. With *Arkham*, the initial proposal was perfect. I ran it by Denny O'Neil because he's the Batman editor." As well as creator of Arkham Asylum, Berger is reminded. "Exactly, which I didn't even know at the time.

"Denny read the plot and really liked it. He read the finished script and maybe had a couple of minor noodles. It's Grant's interpretation of Batman and the villains, but they're still very much in character, just written a little more strangely."

The choice of Dave McKean as artist had a major effect on the story's final form. "We actually asked a couple people before Dave," notes Berger. "But we ultimately went with Dave, which was a good decision." The other artists approached probably wouldn't have painted the story. "When Grant first proposed *Arkham*, it was going to be a 64-page special. But it grew and evolved. Grant started writing for Dave. And Dave ran with it.

"Both Neil and Grant write their scripts for Dave like movie scripts without the page breakdowns because Dave is such an unusual storyteller. He doesn't need a lot of description."

The success of the *Batman* movie and related Bat-merchandising has garnered a great deal of attention from people who don't normally read comics. One of the reasons *Arkham Asylum* is being released in a hardcover $24.95 format, acknowledges Berger, is so casual shoppers will *not* mistake it for an ordinary Batman comic. "It's *definitely* for mature readers," warns Berger. "Grant really wanted to tell a story about crazy people. And it's hard to write a sanitized story about insanity and madness. So, there are rough portrayals of some DC villains. Most of the people in Arkham really are mad—at least the ones Grant's using."

In the late '60s and early '70s, after the death of the *Batman* TV series, the familiar costumed villains were banned from the pages of *Batman* and *Detective Comics*. Returning to his moody Gothic roots, the Caped Crusader wrestled with a variety of supernatural menaces, weird villains like Man-Bat and the Ten-Eyed Man, and the evil machinations of demonic crimelord Ra's al Ghul.

But, those nefarious felons of the '40s were such a part of the Batman legend that then-scribe Denny O'Neil eventually launched a revival of classic villains. Two-Face was the first bad guy to return in the '70s, and in "The Joker's Five-Way Revenge" (*Batman* #251, September 1973), O'Neil and artist Neal Adams revived the Joker as a psychotic murderer. Hence, the Joker does not break out of jail at the story's beginning, but escapes from, according to Batman's thought balloon, "the state hospital for the criminally insane."

With this line, O'Neil established that the Joker—and perhaps other villains—was not merely a crook who used outrageous gimmicks, but a full-fledged psychopath. A year later, in *Batman* #258 and #260, O'Neil named the asylum Arkham, set it in New England (prevailing wisdom now places the institution closer to Gotham) and established an ongoing rivalry between the hospital's two most prominent patients, the Joker and Two-Face.

Ironically, Berger became editor of *Swamp Thing* one issue after Alan Moore had Superman and Green Lantern—two of the "overpeople from the house above the world" in Moore's terms—escort the Floronic Man to Arkham.

Bits of Arkham lore have since continued to weave their way through series edited by Berger. Swamp Thing dropped in on Gotham and the Arkham inmates in issue #52 of his magazine. In Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean's *Black Orchid* mini-series, Arkham was presented as a depressed hellhole through which the Orchid made a Dante-like descent. And Gaiman continued the lunacy through an absurdist encounter between Dr. Destiny and Dr. Jonathan Crane, a.k.a. the Scarecrow, in *Sandman* #5. But, *Arkham Asylum* is not part of any master editorial

plan on Berger's part.

"It just happened to work out that way," she laughs. "I wish there had been a grand plan. It would sound better, like I had some foresight."

Mostly, these British writers take extreme delight in fiddling with the established elements of the DC universe. Without disturbing existing continuity, they add subtle shadings and put bizarre, new spins on old, often unrealized characters.

"Some writers like Neil, Alan and Grant grew up with DC comics, and as writers, they want to find some new or unusual way to approach the DC universe when they're doing something within the continuity,' she says. "That's a decision that they make. Neil deals in superheroes as archetypes more than Grant does, for example. Grant does his version of Batman whereas Neil treats him more as an archetype. Jamie Delano didn't grow up on comics so *Hellblazer* stands on its own.

"Why do the British writers like to turn the DC universe upside down? It's the sensibility of a different culture," Berger suggests. "Even though they speak the same language as we do, England is a much different country than ours. Their government is different. These writers grew up in the aftermath of World War II. There's a very pessimistic look on life over there that results in a more realistic approach, more of a real-world context, to their fantasy.

"The imagination is harder-edged. It has more of a bite. It's more dangerous. Their stories are not as clean and happy ending as an American's would be. They look at the DC universe with a slightly skewed view.

"I don't know exactly why the British guys are doing it that way, but that's all I can think of. That and the weather's really lousy."

Sandman Art: Dave McKean ©copyright 1989 DC Comics Inc.

Like *Arkham*, *Sandman* continually shows the darker side to the flashy underwear world of superheroes.

Art: Dave McKean

It's also possible that variant versions of DC superheroes continually pop up in Berger's comics since she doesn't have a fan's slavish reverence for the characters herself. "I came from outside comics. I wasn't a fangirl at all. I just fell into the field on a fluke," she explains. "The first book I edited was *House of Mystery*.

"I've always enjoyed the horror stuff more—the weird, the supernatural, the surreal. I really don't like the superhero books. They're OK and I've edited plenty of superhero titles in my life. But, I tend to go for the offbeat

Aside from learning the origin of insane manor, some of Batman's unrevealed facets will also come to the surface.

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***Hellblazer*, another British re-interpretation of the DC universe, strays completely clear of its source material.**

superheroes like Animal Man or even Wonder Woman and Legion where it's kind of different, not the straight and narrow stuff. That has its place—it's OK when you're growing up—but it's not my thing."

Despite some alterations requested on *Arkham Asylum* and DC's decision early this year to reject a *Swamp Thing* story in which the plant elemental met Jesus Christ, Berger maintains that comics creators are a fairly autonomous group. "With comics, even though you're working with other people, it's still much purer to the creators' vision than something like movies," Berger says. "The editor has input, but it's not like how movies are made with 5 million people going in there, giving their opinion and doctoring it up.

"At DC, the editors are left to their own judgment and taste to put out comics the company will feel comfortable with. Neither Dick Giordano nor Jenette Kahn read a comic before it goes out. If we do something controversial, we run it past Dick because he's our superior. Then, he can make the decision to either axe it or say yes. Or if he's uncomfortable, then it goes to Jenette. But, it's *rare* that it gets to that point. On a book like *Swamp Thing*, there were times that I took the chance myself because Jenette always encouraged innovation and pushing the envelope. She's always open to new ideas, even ones that might come under controversy.

"When [writer/artist] Rick Veitch suggested the Swamp Thing-Christ thing, we both were aware it might be knocked down, but still said, 'Let's see if we can do it.' " According to Berger, Giordano approved the initial idea but wanted to reserve final judgment until he saw the finished script. "When Dick saw the script, he said it was much stronger and went into certain areas in more detail than in the plot, things that if they were in the plot, he might have said no then."

Ultimately, it was publisher Kahn who decided not to publish the story. "Jenette's response was that it was a very good and intelligently written story that treated Christ respectfully, but because Christ interacted with Swamp Thing, in an imaginary situation obviously, that even an average Christian person would be offended. If you go by scriptures—of course, I'm Jewish, Jenette's Jewish—Christ *didn't* meet a swamp monster. That's really what upset Jenette and brought about that decision, that Christ was interacting with fictional characters.

"And we've gotten mail saying, 'I'm an average Christian and I wouldn't be offended,' but they don't know exactly what the story is and maybe they would have been offended. Who's to say?

"Many people were screaming, 'It's censorship, it's censorship.' But to me, censorship is more of a government concept. A publishing company decides to reject material all the time. I have three *Animal Man* scripts sitting in my drawer because they just weren't right or Grant was a little too heavy-handed. I don't think it's censorship. It's a publisher deciding what they want to publish. It happens every day."

Berger sees this situation as "an isolated instance," but says she would seek her publisher's opinion earlier in a similar circumstance. "I was under the impression that this one was going to go my way since I did get a conditional approval and I was pushing things so much in my books," she says. "But, no one expected it to be [so powerful]. I usually go more with the creators and say, 'Gee, let's try to do this.' Not to see what we can get away with, but to tell a good story that has never been done before, to do something different.

"Ultimately, this was the one that didn't get past. We hit the barrier. I know now [to be cautious] with religious things, but this was an isolated incident. Jenette is still very encouraging of stuff that's different, creative and avant-garde." Karen Berger insists. "Even in *Hellblazer*, we've had stories with Christian evangelists that have been fine with her. But if someone said to me they wanted to use Christ again, I think it's one of those where we would say no."

Karen Berger's Magic Kingdom

One of the trademarks of Karen Berger's stable of titles—most notably *Swamp Thing*, *Hellblazer* and *Sandman*—are the striking painted covers. Even more than a 'mature readers" label, the cover paintings distinguish these series in the four-color marketplace. "It looks like it has been planned, but it wasn't," says Berger. "I guess *Swamp Thing* was the first book to use painted covers every now and then because John Totleben is also a painter and he asked, 'Can I paint a cover?' I said, 'Sure, the stuff looks good.'

"And then I found Dave McKean- I mean, *met* Dave McKean. It's not like he was lost or anything. His stuff was so wonderful, but it was going to be a while before *Black Orchid* came out and we wanted to have some place to display Dave's work. Since horror books don't have the built-in superhero advantage of attracting people, we hoped the painted covers would really make them stand out so we said, 'Let's do that with *Hellblazer*.'

"Richard [Bruning, DC Design Director and Berger's husband] is always trying to get more painted covers on our books and fighting for budget. So, it has been a goal, both editorially and from his design end."

Meanwhile, the boys from Britain continue to romp through the DC playground under Berger's guidance. In the current issue of *Sandman*, Morpheus meets Sandman Hector Hall (who assumed the mantle of the 1970s Sandman in *Infinity Inc.* #49-50). "We're resolving the Roy Thomas Sandman. Since that's the most recent Sandman, we wanted to figure out a way to work him into our storyline,' explains Berger. "Fans are asking, 'What about this Sandman, what about that one?' It's always a pain in the neck when you're doing the *fourth* version of a character."

There's also a new *Shade the Changing Man* series due early next year to be written by Pete (*Skreemer*) Milligan. Berger has "a talented newcomer" pegged as artist for the 12-issue limited series which will sport covers by British painter Brendan McCarthy.

"Pete Milligan has a unique voice," comments the editor. 'His style is even a little more skewed than Neil Gaiman, Grant Morrison or Jamie Delano. Maybe it's just the way he is. He's a more philosophical person and brings that into his work. He's extrapolating what happened with Shade after the original Steve Ditko stuff and continues in an entirely different direction.

"It's a socially relevant horror story about insanity and madness. It's a realistic and powerful series. It takes place across America. Pete came to America last year and took a bus, train and plane trip for three weeks going to strange towns and cities, sitting in pubs or parks, and finding out how people are. He's really done a lot of research."

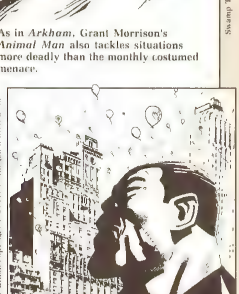
Spring will also see the release of *The Book of Magic*, written by Neil Gaiman with art by four different painters. At presstime, only John Bolton was signed. "*The Book of Magic* uses the DC supernatural characters sort of like *History of the DC Universe* in terms of format," explains Berger. 'It's Prestige, but it's a story and it doesn't cover every character like the *History* did. Neil has managed to find a way to appeal to both the regular comic-book reader and someone who doesn't read comics. It's a story about all the DC magic characters, but it's also another story that has *nothing* to do with them for two issues. So, it's really about magic and the universe. It's cosmic."

Apparently, Gaiman has been warming up for this project in the pages of *Sandman* where he has found dramatic potential in such arcane and obscure DC characters as former horror anthology hosts Destiny and, more surprisingly, the three witches from *The Witching Hour*. "It's amazing, isn't it?" asks Karen Berger from the skewed sidelines of the DC universe. "Those old characters work—and they're *not* silly."

—Gary D'Angelo

The recent *Swamp Thing* controversy has made everyone re-evaluate exactly what is "Suggested for Mature Readers."

As in *Arkham*, Grant Morrison's *Animal Man* also tackles situations more deadly than the monthly costumed menace.



***Skreemer* scribe Pete Milligan will be taking Steve Ditko's *Shade the Changing Man* into a new light.**

Batman, Joker, Sandman, Swamp Thing, Animal Man & Other Associated Characters Trademark DC Comics

"The People Next Door" Move In

Wes Craven's new neighbors lead a life that's a bit on the far side.

By MARC SHAPIRO

So far, only one special effect on the new CBS TV series *The People Next Door* has not worked. The irony of that rejection is that it was too good to be true.

"It was the scene in the pilot where we attempted to get Walter to literally sweat bullets," recalls Steven Sunshine who, with wife Madeline, is the show's executive producer. "We used real bullets and the effects looked real good. Unfortunately, it did not look *real* so it was shelved."

What has worked within the context of this off-center sitcom has been a moose head that makes its presence felt, assorted creatures, a very unreal answering machine, Steve Allen playing a piano and that grandaddy of all special FX, an appearance by perennial teenager Dick Clark.

"This show is different from most network sitcoms in that it's so nonlinear," says Sunshine. "It takes you off the freeway and inserts things that allow you to take the scenic route."

The People Next Door, which stars Jeffrey (*Beetlejuice*) Jones (STARLOG #132), Mary Gross, Christina (*Masters of the Universe*) Pickles, Jaclyn Bernstein, Chance Quinn and Leslie Jordan, focuses on successful New York cartoonist Walter Kellogg, who remarries and relocates his family to Ohio. Once there, his wife, Abigail, discovers her husband's unique ability to make his imaginary characters come to life and interact with the family.

Matters get a bit on the far side when Mary Gross and Jeffrey Jones move in as *The People Next Door*.

Sound a bit off *Cosby*'s beaten path? Well, consider this: The guy with the bright idea is also the man who created Freddy Krueger.

"I was talking to a couple of producers about a feature directing job," relates Wes Craven. "The film didn't work out but they were very enthusiastic about working with me and asked me what I wanted to do."

What Craven had wanted to do for years was comedy—and in particular, a TV series. Unfortunately, after having been typed as the Guru of Gore, suggesting laughs has normally gotten Craven the gate.

"But, when I said I wanted to do comedy, they said come up with a concept. I went home and came back the next day with this idea of a cartoonist whose ideas come to life. They liked it. I went away and, with my writing partner Bruce Wagner, came up with characters and a plot. We went to CBS a week later and pitched the idea. It was bought immediately."

Craven claims *The People Next Door* is equal parts his mania for *Far Side* cartoonist Gary Larson's work and his own life.

"I had married a second time to somebody from the midwest who was younger than I was. I brought two kids from the previous marriage, which was rough for her as was the idea of suddenly having to deal with the show business craziness that comes with living with Wes Craven. So, in many ways, this is *my* life."

And it is a life that is presently be-

All People Next Door Photos © CBS

ing cared for and fed by the Sunshines who are quick to defend their offspring as not being another attempt at *My World and Welcome to It*, the landmark 1969-70 TV series inspired by cartoonist James Thurber's life.

"This is *not* that show at all," says Madeline Sunshine. "Walter's cartoons don't come to life. His imagination does."

"And even on the occasion when his cartoons do come to life," injects Steven Sunshine, "it is in the form of real people we can get into as human beings who, even though they're figments of Walter's imagination, act and relate as real human beings."

Bruno and Laurie George had a good laugh when they discovered a total of 27 FX shots were slotted in for the *People Next Door* pilot episode.

"We couldn't believe that there would be this kind of effects work involved in a half-hour sitcom," recalls Laurie George. "Now, we do."

The Georges, four shows into the season, are essentially relying on special FX basics.

"We're leaning a lot on split screens with full-sized characters, lots of blue screen, minimal electronic animation and puppeteering. What we're staying away from is stop motion and real jazzy electronic transitions. Most of what we're doing is just your basic four-frame transition that lets characters pop in, which is in keeping with the idea that this guy has really imagined up reality."

Jeffrey Jones is the cartoonist whose imaginings become reality. Those are *Hollywood Dog* artist Ron Overmyer's cartoons in the background.

Ron Overmyer seems to be enjoying the show's creative freedom. The cartoonist, whose *Hollywood Dog* strip appears in a number of regional publications and is in the series-pilot stage with Fox Television, draws the cartoons that Walter Kellogg is allegedly hard at work on in each episode. Overmyer also provides the gag sketches that appear in the end title credits.

"What I do," explains Overmyer, "is read the script and draw something that, in most cases, has something to do with what's going on in the episode. Everything that Walter's drawing I draw. The hard part has been trying to find simple, wow' kind of ideas that reflect Walter's very simple character. So far, I've been able to give them everything they've asked for."

And, in some cases, the task has been downright pleasant. "For one show, they wanted a cartoon of a pubescent male child's idea of a very sexual woman. Needless to say, drawing overextended mammary glands was a gas."

Mary Gross was dying to do a network series. Under contract to CBS for that reason, the actress, formerly of *Saturday Night Live*, was beginning to think it would never happen.

"I was given the *People Next Door* script and thought it was fun and different,' she remembers. "Then, I was told Jeffrey Jones was going to do it. When I heard that, I said I was, too.'

Gross jokingly points out that as psychologist Abigail, she has more to do than share stage space with Jones.

"I like the idea that my character has many things to do,' she declares. 'I've got to act as a buffer between Walter and the rest of the town. I've also got to keep Walter's secret from people who can't find out. Abigail is set in the middle of what goes on in this show. On the one hand, she is allowed to enjoy the benefits of Walter's imagination. But, she also has to constantly be on guard that Walter stays in touch with reality.

"It's hard working with the special FX," concedes Gross. "You've got to remember dialogue, remember where your mark is and worry about reacting to something that isn't there. That's hard work."

For some at any rate.

"Special effects? No, they're *no* problem for me," says Jeffrey Jones who has battled things that weren't there in *Beetlejuice* and *Howard the Duck*. "But, hey, that's not really the selling point of this show anyway."

Jones, a veteran film actor, has long been subjected to TV series offers. "My answer had always been no, but at some point, I started thinking that I should reconsider. When I read the *People Next Door* script, I did."

He glosses over the particulars of characterization and plot by saying, "The stories are good and Walter's character is evolving.' What seems to excite the actor is the prospect of doing TV with a movie sensibility.

"We're making this show a lot like you make a film," assesses Jones. "Things are done out of sync, in pieces and imagining effects that will be added later is definitely not your typical television element."

At the same time, he admits, 'If anything, this is much more like doing a play. We're doing a 22-minute show in two days. We've got to be fast, and at the end, it all has to make sense."

Jones is reminded that a scene shot the previous day, in which Walter and Abigail ride off into the sunset astride real horses, doesn't necessarily make perfect sitcom sense.

"Yeah, but that's the sort of thing that makes this show special," the performer counters. "It's corny and unbelievable. But, where else on television are you going to see something like that?"

Hellraiser

(continued from page 12)

Hellraiser movies for our sister magazine) and artist Bill Kobe are collaborating on a tale. A James Sherman story currently in the works will explore the Mayan legends of life and death, which will tie into the workings of the Cenobites and Hell. In addition, *Meltdown* artists Jay Muth and Kent Williams, Bill Sienkiwicz, and Kevin O'Neill will contribute various covers and pin-ups to the title.

"I've also been in contact with authors like John Skipp and Craig Spector, who have done great stuff like *The Book of the Dead* and *The Light at the End*," Chichester says. "Clive is getting in touch with Stephen King about doing a story."

And what about *Hellraiser*'s creator, Clive Barker? "Clive has been extremely supportive of the book," Chichester points out. "I deal with him directly, and he either gets back to me with suggestions or lets it ride." As for any tales of terror written by Barker himself, the editor regrets, "Clive's schedule is right out the window. He has done an introduction for the first issue, but he's too busy at the moment to provide any stories. He will be doing some interior illustrations and pin-ups, however."

The four-color medium has its own hellish benefits. "One really big advantage the *Hellraiser* comic book has over the movies," Chichester notes, "is that we're *not* tied down by a budget. We can do things that may be far outside the spectrum of the films. If Jan Strnad wants to send Face to another planet for a story, he can do that, since it doesn't cost anything beyond what it's normally going to cost. We'll also have the opportunity to fill in any holes that occurred between movies and answer all questions that may be asked.

"*Hellraiser* will also benefit from the media tie-in it has with the movies. The tie-in will make people pick the book up and check out its quality. But, that's where advantages of the tie-in ends. You have an immediate draw for people to get in, but once you get them in, you're also the one who has to keep them in. The media's a great hook at first, but if the project isn't any good, no one's going to stick around to read it. That's why I did a mass-mailing to the top writers and artists throughout the comics and commercial arts industries. I wanted some top creative teams working on this book, and from what I've seen some of them come up with so far," says Dan Chichester. "I'm sure *Hellraiser* will be a book that will appeal to *all* horror fans."

Mr. Monster

(continued from page 28)

DC, about the licensing of *Watchmen* or something along those lines. He said, Resolve this now, or he had a number of projects he was going to cut. Unfortunately, ours was the first one. Then, he decided he wasn't going to work for DC anymore. I certainly understand Alan's position, and that's fine, but I'm disappointed because it would have made a terrific story." Gilbert remains hopeful, revealing, "Alan and I would still like to work together. We had worked up a really good plot, so there's always the hope that we'll do the story without Swamp Thing."

While keeping such heady company, Gilbert is reticent about accepting such appellations as "fan favorite." The standard jump of popular writer/artist to one of the two major mainstream comics publishers doesn't seem immediately likely. Frankly, he feels, "I'm not convinced they would be jumping to have Michael Gilbert.

"The big advantage is the money is much better. Fifty thousand 14-year-old fans suddenly know your name, care about you, genuflect before you. But when you're working for yourself," which he does as editor of his own projects, "you can really express yourself and say what you want.

"When I was a teenager, I wanted nothing more than to be a Marvel artist working with Stan Lee," Gilbert admits. "Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko and *me*! If that didn't work out, then DC was pretty cool, too. I couldn't break in, so I tried going in sideways, trying to break into underground comics, which I did just as they essentially died. Fortunately, I happened to be in the right place at the right time. I managed to get into the 'ground-level comics,' which I've always thought was a horrible term. That seeped into the alternatives, which led to *Elric* and *Mr. Monster*."

In regards to the tone of his own upcoming stories, Gilbert confesses, "I'm *seriousee* out for a while. After this, I'll be looking forward to doing lighter stories. There's another big full-length Mr. Monster story in my head, but that won't be for another two or three years down the line." For readers who can't wait that long, the monster-slaying Doc Stearn will be appearing in upcoming issues of *A-1*, a British import and possibly in several color specials from his regular publisher Dark Horse as well. Until then, Michael T. Gilbert is content. "I *love* Mr. Monster," he explains. "It's really the most satisfying thing I've ever done in comics."

Dracula

(continued from page 20)

lore to choose from. Stoker didn't invent the form, and we're not sticking just to Stoker—we're sticking to the legends of the area."

None of the supporting characters from the Stoker book are used in Shanklin and Wheatley's work, although there is an homage to the Van Helsings.

"About the only enemy that Dracula has for any length of time is Symon Lyfe," Shanklin says. "Lyfe manages to capture and study Dracula while he is dead, learns the secrets of a vampire, and imbues himself with immortality. The character pops up again in 2199, and he's definitely not a good guy—he's very much out for himself."

The other recurring characters (making numerous appearances in "Death Dreams") are Professor Kleigh and his descendants whose lives intertwine with the vampire's existence throughout all of the series.

"They believe in Dracula, know him to be the antithesis of the human race, and have devoted their lives to proving his existence or stopping him," details Shanklin. "One of the first people to face Dracula was one of the Kleighs. We treat it as if this is what Stoker knew, and Stoker renamed him Van Helsing. Lyfe seeks out one of his descendants in the year 2199, saying they are the only ones with the potential to stop Dracula."

Shanklin and Wheatley's Dracula is more traditional, and not related to the current horror-punk trend; they emphasize that he is definitely *not* a hero.

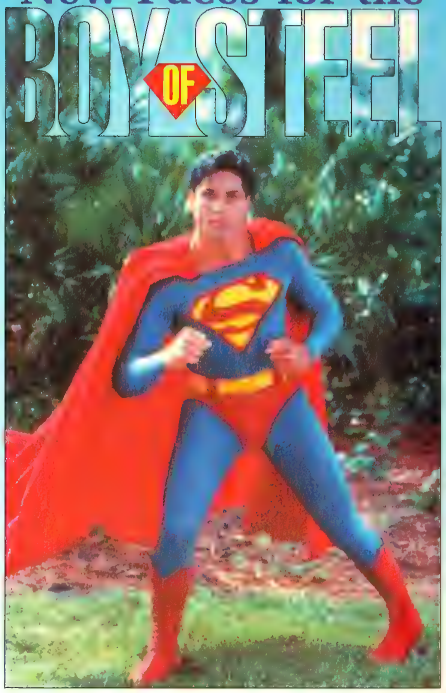
"Dracula is very much who he wants to be. His father was put to death by Christians," notes Rickey Shanklin. "Dracula didn't take kindly to this and wanted to reclaim his kingdom, but the only way he could do this was to go to the devil. Through this, he gained the power to reclaim his homeland. He's very much fueled by vengeance.

"He doesn't even perceive himself as evil. He's only out for one thing—whatever *he* wants. He doesn't care about people whatsoever, unless he chooses to. He sees people about the same way most people see a chicken dinner—there's no sympathy or compassion.

"Dracula is a force of nature that works against what is good for people on this planet," says Mark Wheatley. "This is what I meant before when I said Marvel hedged it. We're *not* hedging it. We decided right off the bat that Dracula is an evil guy—and he is the star of our book!"

By BILL WILSON

New Faces for the BOY OF STEEL



Continuity revamped, characters redesigned, "Superboy" attempts flight once more.

Despite a strong performance in its maiden season, during which it consistently ranked among the top new syndicated TV shows, *Superboy: The Series* flies into its second 26-week season amidst sweeping changes to its cast, crew and production facilities.

When it premiered in October 1988, *Superboy* was the first weekly TV series to be produced at the new Disney/MGM Studios in Orlando, Florida. For this second journey into America's homes (currently six to seven million households per week), the series moves several miles down Interstate 4 to Universal Studios Florida, "the largest motion picture and television sound facility outside Hollywood," where it is now showcased as that studio's first weekly television product.

Executive Producer Ilya Salkind, the man who gave the world *Superman I, II* and *III*, explains, "Our experience at Disney was very good, but this promises to be even better. When we came to Florida a year ago, we went to Universal first because of my long association with Tom Pollock, the Chairman of Universal, who had been my lawyer and my father's lawyer for 13 years. Unfortunately, Universal's facilities were not ready at the time, so we went to Disney. We tried to negotiate for a larger stage, but discussions always turned to talk of the larger stages being available for movies, not TV series. So, during our hiatus between seasons, we decided to make the move."

And Salkind's commitment to future project development in the booming Central Florida area is clear: "Not only have I bought a house here, but I plan to base both *Superman V* and *Christopher Columbus: The Movie* here, both $35 million pictures," he says. "I love it here. It works, the people are great, there is help, there is enthusiasm, and the facilities are tops. In many respects, we've achieved things here that perhaps we wouldn't have been able to accomplish in the movies." With post-production for *Superboy* now handled on-site by Universal's state-of-the-art Century III, there's the promise of more intricate and convincing special FX sequences than last year's.

Accompanying the Boy of Steel's move to another studio will be a new approach to the character. "It's important that the show had a year of exploration, of refining certain angles," Salkind explains. "I come from movies, and perhaps it wasn't easy to get the right TV angle. But this second season should be absolutely tremendous, and I'm saying that with total confidence. Part of this new season's success will be due to our learning and understanding just how important 50 years of comic books have been to Superboy/Superman. The first season we got a little lost, and we forgot just how much the character can influence an audience, how important he is to them. I think what was missing last year was that lovable, accessible nerd aspect of Clark Kent which people identify with so much, which I feel you need to balance the superhero side."

The "nerd" aspect of Clark's personality, so deftly developed by Christopher Reeve in the Superman films, was one thing actor John

With new characters and revamped continuity, Haiduk and Christopher hope *Superboy* will fly for several more seasons.

Haymes Newton vehemently opposed in his approach to the Clark/Superboy relationship in season one (as Newton noted in CS#6) and this philosophical difference, among other things, led to what is probably the biggest news concerning *Superboy's* second TV season.

John Haymes Newton is *gone*, replaced by actor Gerard Christopher, who at 30 years of age is some eight years Newton's senior, but looks every bit the part of the Boy of Steel. Although *Superboy* represents Christopher's first regular TV role, his previous motion picture credits include *Dangerously Close* and *Tomboy*.

"A new talent playing Clark is *not* important," Salkind proclaims. "What *is* important is that Clark Kent should be a mild-mannered reporter. We're going back to more complicated roots and experience is needed, and Gerard as Clark will bring us that experience."

"I don't think people will identify with me as a *new* person playing the character," Christopher begins. "The character's the same. Superboy's what's important, and I intend to have a lot of fun with the character. Clark's going to be much more human, very clumsy. You'll see many of the problems he has as a real person, but also the problems he has being an alien and a human being all at the same time, and the problems he has dealing with himself as a superhero, having to act the part of the nerdy kid."

The actor's love for the character prompted him to meet the challenge of bringing Superboy to life on screen head-on. "I was a Superman fan as a kid, and when this opportunity came up, I just couldn't believe it," Christopher says. "I've gone up for many things in my career, things I enjoyed doing and all, but never have I been as excited as I was when I heard they were interested in *seeing* me for this! I really felt in my heart that I was 'right' for Superboy. There's a certain look that must be there, a certain love for the character that must be there, and they were all there for me. At first, I was just really excited about trying out for it, but when I got the part, I was ecstatic!"

Christopher glances up at a cable hook-up above his head, and a slight smile creeps across his face. "If you've ever flown—I mean, on a cable like this one right here like I did the other day—it's as close to your childhood dream of flying as you can possibly get." And how did it feel the first time he put on the red-and-blue longjohns? "*Fantastic*, a lot of fun. I

Series veteran Stacy Haiduk gets a lift from her new Superboy, Gerard Christopher.

All Superman characters Trademark & ©2000 DC Comics Inc.

looked at myself in the mirror, and it was really hard to believe I was really in it. It's a great feeling. I mean, *everyone* has seen the old TV shows with George Reeves, and the movies with Chris Reeve, and wondered just what it's like. Superman is just such a great character, so all-American."

Joining Gerard Christopher as a newcomer to the cast this season is Ilan Mitchell-Smith, who starred in *Weird Science*. Smith portrays Andy McAlister, Clark's new roommate, replacing T.J. White (Jim Calvert) who has gone to Metropolis to work at *The Daily Planet* with his father Perry White. The Andy McAlister character adds tension as well as a touch of comic relief to the series as he schemes to involve the Boy of Steel in a variety of get-rich-quick "business propositions," thereby putting greater pressure on Clark to keep his secret identity hidden.

Stacy Haiduk, the solitary holdover from the first season ("The old person," she declares) knows the new cast will be different to work with, but she remains excited about her role as Lana Lang. "Working with John and Jim last season was really enjoyable," she says. "I'm going to miss them both very much."

In the absence of photographer T.J. White, Lana will pair with Clark more frequently this year, working more closely as a journalistic team, giving Lana more opportunities to develop into a stronger character "instead of being the one who gets kidnapped, or whatever. That stuff's OK once in a while, but, I mean, if I were in some of the situations *she* has been in, I probably would've tried to kick the person's butt! I'm hoping we'll see much more of *that* side of Lana Lang!"

Effervescent as always, Haiduk does bristle a bit at the mention of last season's Boy of Steel, John Haymes Newton, with whom she had a special chemistry on-screen and a close relationship off-screen. "I won't say it will be tremendously difficult to stare at a new face in that same role, because I am a professional actress after all, and it is more an image of a character as opposed to a specific person, but...John and I did have a very close friendship...and it is different..." Her voice trails off, a brief faraway look in her eyes, and then she quickly composes herself and continues with renewed enthusiasm. "Gerard's a great guy, and I'm really looking forward to working with him and Ilan and seeing the effects of the dimension they've added to all our characters. We were all like one big family last year—cast, crew and all—and I think it's going to be the same again this year. At least, I hope so."

Through it all, however, the one thing which may determine *Superboy's* second season success, despite the changes in production facilities and cast, is the quality of the stories themselves, and that is precisely where Executive Story Consultants Mark Jones and Cary Bates come in. Jones, a TV veteran and a longtime Superman

In the second season, the focus is on Clark Kent's new roommate Andy McAlister (Ilan Mitchell-Smith, left), Lana Lang (Haiduk) and of course, Kent (Christopher).

All Superboy Photos: Copyright 1989 Viacom

fan, and Bates, an accomplished writer of many of the Man and Boy of Steel's comic-book adventures, form a team who believe they are involved in something "special."

"*Superboy* is a TV show unlike any other," Jones explains, "and it's important to reinforce that by staying away from 'police stories' and concentrating on the larger-than-life aspects of the character. It's in the mold of *Batman*, with that feeling of being real close to 'pushing it' while still being firmly grounded in reality."

"This season, there will be other larger-than-life characters to share the stage with Superboy," Bates adds. 'Last season, he was the only one, alone in a mundane world. If a hero is only as good as his villains, this year Superboy should be stronger than ever. We'll be putting him in real jeopardy this time, at the hands of such classic comic-book foes as Metallo, Bizarro and Mr. Mxyzptlk, as well as, of course, Lex Luthor.'

And then there's a new antagonist, Young Dracula. "Young Dracula is the kind of character who has a dangerous edge to him. He and Superboy soon find they have an odd kinship to each other because they're cut from a similar mold, outcasts of a sort. Young Dracula, by virtue of his very nature, provides an element of danger to the story, at once both Superboy's equal and his adversary."

With Clark Kent and Lana Lang working closely now on editorial assignments for the *Shuster University Journal*, just how their relationship develops was of great concern to both consultants. "Cary and I put together an 'internal bible' if you will, detailing the entire Clark/Lana/Superboy triangle in order to develop strongly defined relationships between them," Jones says. "Clark is the one with the crush on Lana, while she is definitely in love with Superboy and thinks she and Clark are 'just friends.' Since TV is such a character medium, it's important for these characters to be very strongly defined."

"We want to avoid having Lana perceived as replacing the T.J. White character as Clark's photographer-buddy," Bates adds. "She's interested in photography, is helpful to Clark in that respect, but she doesn't think she's very good.

"Andy McAlister, on the other hand, is better as a roommate than the T.J. character because he provides a much-needed contrast to Superboy, the exact opposite of Clark. He's the kind of kid who pulled strings to get Clark as a roommate so that he could get close to him and thereby, hopefully, get close to Superboy."

"He's a real pain in the ass," Jones interjects. "He's always scheming."

DC Comics maintains an active interest in the development of the *Superboy* series, retaining story approval and such, but Jones explains it's a healthy partnership: "We have a good relationship with DC, [Editor-in-chief] Jenette Kahn, [*Superman* editor] Mike Carlin and Andy Helfer. They keep control while entrusting us with a good deal of responsibility to maintain the characters' integrity. It's a team effort. Mike and Andy have written some things, and both Denny O'Neil and Eliot S. Maggin have done scripts for this season. We're all happy with the arrangement.'

Huddled over typewriters almost constantly, both Jones and Bates get little time to see first-hand how things progress on the set, but what they have seen, they've liked. "This second season, it's a whole different show,' Bates offers. "The second 13 episodes of the first season are more indicative

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Craig

(continued from page 49)

in trouble? "I must say I never paid attention to that," she says. "I don't know if Burt and Adam were aware of it. No one talked about it. I know someone who had access to all the files and letters that were written back and forth between ABC and 20th Century Fox/Greenway Productions [Dozier's company], and apparently, they were going wildly overbudget all the time. It was a very expensive show to do. ABC did not feel it was cost-effective anymore.

"So, when we left for Thanksgiving in November, we didn't know if we were going to do another season or not. We didn't even say goodbye to one another because we didn't know that it might be our last season. And then, we weren't picked up.

"I understood that later, when my agent called and told me *Batman* had not been renewed. NBC called the network and said they would take the show *if* the sets were still standing. Unfortunately, they had already bulldozed the Batcave—I heard it was an $800,000 investment on ABC's part — so that was that."

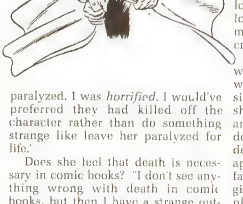
When asked about her reaction to *Batman* when she first watched it, Craig says, "All I could fixate on was the fact that the guy who played Batman had a paunch. I recall saying to myself, 'I can't believe that this guy has a big stomach in certain shots.' What I didn't realize then, of course, was that it was Adam's stunt double.

"I finally met Adam West [see STARLOG #117] when we shot the 15-minute presentation. He has this wonderfully dry sense of humor. He said to me [imitating West's halting delivery], 'Oh...you have..ballet dancer's..legs. I like..ballet dancer's..legs," she laughs. "He was charming. Later, he said, 'Make sure that I don't block your keylight, I'm very broad-shouldered. And I thought, 'Shouldn't somebody else be saying that?' But, it turned out that it was not vanity on his part; he *is* very broad-shouldered. When I stood behind him, I looked like I was in blackface; there was *no* light. I also realized that Adam had a very nice physique. It was Hubie Blake, his stunt double, who was about 30 years older than Adam, who had the gut."

As for Burt Ward (STARLOG #124), Craig remembers, "He was...weary. I started to shake hands with him when we were introduced, but he didn't offer his hand to me. I found that really peculiar. Knowing that this was the first job he had ever had, I think he felt threatened. But it was the only time he was anything less than wonderful. Once shooting was underway, he seemed to warm up to me. And he was a doll from that day forward."

Craig has done her part for the *Batman* TV series revival, filming wraparounds for TV stations with Julie Newmar (STARLOG #148), Adam West and Burt Ward, and making guest appearances at conventions. At one, she was approached by DC Comics editor Julius Schwartz, who pointed at her and said, "I created you." Replied a boggled Craig, "My mother and father would like to know about you." Then, he clarified things and explained that he had created Batgirl for the comics. My guess is that the producers [of *Batman*] knew they were going to introduce Batgirl, so they worked out something with Julius to unveil her in the comics beforehand."

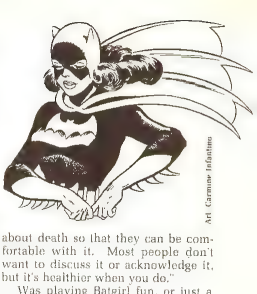
At the convention, she was informed that her comic-book counterpart was about to undergo a significant change. Recalls Craig, "They had an advance copy of [*The Killing Joke*] and asked if I wanted to see it. I said, Sure. Then, I read it and found out that Batgirl gets hit by a bullet and is



paralyzed. I was *horrified*. I would've preferred they had killed off the character rather than do something strange like leave her paralyzed for life."

Does she feel that death is necessary in comic books? "I don't see anything wrong with death in comic books, but then I have a strange outlook on death. I truly believe that it's the same as life, that it's all a big circle in the sense that you're a certain entity now, then that body quits and you get rid of it, and you become something else. I'm never really very upset about anybody dying; I figure they're now off a very chaotic planet.

"Death is part of life, and children need to know about it. What they *don't* need to be exposed to is violent death and torture and maiming, all of that stuff. Children need to know



about death so that they can be comfortable with it. Most people don't want to discuss it or acknowledge it, but it's healthier when you do."

Was playing Batgirl fun, or just a job? "It was a fun *job*," Craig smiles. "But when we were doing it, it was just a job, just one of many. I didn't know I would still be talking about Batgirl 20 years later. I'm certainly *not* talking about *Peter Loves Mary* [a 1960 NBC sitcom on which she appeared]. I have a feeling that when you're a writer and you write something, you're just doing the work. If it turns out to last 100 years, you're probably shocked out of your mind."

Even today, the actress continues to be noticed by fans on the street. "People recognize me, and always have. Going through customs in London last year on my return from Africa, a young man behind the counter looked at me and said, 'I know you! You were Batgirl!'" In fact, Batfans approach her "even when I look as if I've been run over by a truck: hair askew, no makeup on, looking really awful. When I think I look really spiffy, *nobody* recognizes me! That must mean I looked *really* crappy on film!"

Looking back, she feels that "Batgirl was probably a good role model. She was take-charge and quick to assess a situation and take action on it. And she wasn't violent—she was wifey and quick-witted. As Barbara Gordon, she was efficient and independent. She lived by herself in a great apartment, and she was close to her father without being 'daddy's little girl. But at the same time, I was playing the role, none of that came to mind. And who can say that any of it was deliberate on the writers' part?

"None of us had any idea *Batman* would stand the test of time," admits Yvonne Craig wistfully. "Adam says he knew from the start it was going to be a classic. I remember saying at the time, 'Oh, Adam, get serious!' I figured the kids didn't know who was under those masks, and they didn't really care.

I'm happy to say that I was wrong."

Faust

(continued from page 24)

sual freedom. My visual image is not as strong as his. Over breakfast this morning, we were figuring out ways to play to each other's strengths. I like to give him writing that's more inspirational than explanatory. Issue #5 is a great example of something that was a fairly dense story, but had a lot of room in which to embellish and explore. I'm proud that the interplay of words and pictures are never redundant. Some people might want words that just explain the picture and pictures that illustrate the words. I've had people tell me that it's hard to read, because it seems the words are talking about something different from what the pictures are showing. For those people, I guess, OK, they should go get *Captain America*."

The two are planning more *Faust* books to add to the mythology. One is a sort of prequel to the current limited series, in which a student of weaponry in '60s China falls prey to the same evil forces that have John Jaspers in their grip.

But, just what *is* Faust's problem anyway?

"I would say his confusion, his memory," offers Vigil. "He's freaking out. The only purpose he has right now is his connection to Jade. He remembers love, but he feels this evil, and he knows he was stripped of his identity and personality and he's trying to find that. In certain ways, he realizes that this primitive ability he has of slashing people in half is beyond human. He must face something inhuman in himself."

"He's terribly, terribly enraged," says Quinn. "The only certainties he can pin down could be illusion, a problem we must all face. Why does everything have to change? Why can't things stay understandable? He's not just dealing with a crazy city or an unbelievable job situation or an intense relationship. He has all of that, plus the fact that he went through this ordeal, unable to use all of his mind."

"He has almost this craving of violence in him, so primitive it became surrealistic," says Tim Vigil. "The splatter of blood, the drenching of baptism. He gets wild."

"But, he'll recapture a lot of his feeling before the eventual violent climax between him and M (for Mephistopheles), so there's a little bit of light before it's all over," says David Quinn.

Now artist and writer smile beatifically and go back to plotting just how outrageous they can make issue #5 without selling their own souls to the devil.

Bank

(continued from page 51)

philosophically and in terms of the story, the heart should *not* have been pictured because it was the guilt of the young man that made him hear it beating. If we presented the heart pumping, it *might* have been misleading to readers. It is now the young man pointing to the dismembered body under the floorboards. We weren't sure Bank Street would let us show loose parts, but they understood the story and OKed that panel.

"Bank Street was very conservative in their approach. Violence, except for the *Mystery* volume, is at a minimum. There are many SF and fantasy stories which include death and destruction, but this isn't what Bank Street wanted. They have a reputation that they've worked long and hard to attain and they're well respected in all parts of the country. They didn't want a PTA in South Texas taking a look at this and saying it's the devil's work. On the other hand, if it's too whitebread, you have nothing there that's worthwhile, so it is a very thin line that we had to walk."

With the *Bank Street Books* in bookstores, there's the question of a follow-up series. Zimmerman is unsure whether one will materialize. "We'll have to see what happens with sales. Having gone through several dozen nightmares on this, a second series would not be nearly as difficult."

For the moment, though, the former third grade teacher continues to work with Byron Preiss on a series of new ventures. Among them are graphic novels for Marvel including an adaptation of William Gibson's *Neuromancer*, several SF anthology comics for which he promises a lineup of major SF authors, and another co-production with Bank Street which he teasingly refers to as "imaginary museums."

Zimmerman hopes that the *Bank Street Books* will only be the first volley in an attempt to introduce a new approach to education into America's classrooms in much the same way Bank Street revolutionized the field of childhood instruction with its *Bank Street Reader* two decades ago. It's Zimmerman's hope that teachers will take up illustrated material as a way of supplementing their courses as he did years ago when he had his class fill in the word balloons for an unlettered *Spider-Man* comic only to discover that his students turned out a better story than the pro writer.

"Learning is a mystical thing," Howard Zimmerman says. "Nobody knows what it is, but we do it."

Superboy

(continued from page 64)

of the direction we'll be going, but with the new characters and storylines, we've basically cleaned house."

New to the show, Jones adds his views: "Perhaps I can see things from a different perspective, this being my first season and all. I think I'm less biased, but what I've seen has been terrific. Gerry's just great in the role, and the show has a bigger 'feel' than last year. We've been shooting the episode with Metallo, and I think Michael Callan as Metallo gives a performance similar to Jack Nicholson's in *Batman*—really intense, really into it, projecting evil while having fun at the same time."

Speaking of having fun, Jones suggests this enthusiasm is shared by cast and crew: "The crew keeps talking about how 'tough' it is, but that means it's a good show, a *packed* 20 minutes. The actors are happy; if actors aren't enthused, the words fall flat."

Superboy premieres with a two-part episode showcasing the "new and improved" Lex Luthor, now played by Sherman Howard, "with insidious delight," Jones describes. "Luthor is still 19 years old, but we see him after complete plastic surgery and new vocal chords, giving him the appearance of a 37-year-old man," thus Howard's casting. "Now, Luthor's not *just* a bad guy; he's the kind of guy who would kill little puppies or his best friend. No remorse. No redeeming qualities. By the second episode's end, you will see just how powerful and evil Lex Luthor really is."

With scripts in hand and filming underway, Bates and Jones are excited about the new season. Comments Jones, "I've worked on TV shows before, but I really like the fun here, because *Superboy* combines elements of so many things I've been involved and interested in: comics, TV, animation. It's actually fun to work, a fun show to do. It's an 'easy' series to do, and by that I mean that it's the kind of show that practically writes itself. No struggle at all." Bates, reinforcing the "fun" aspect, admits, "Sure, it's lots of fun. As good a time as I had and as much as I enjoyed working in the comics, this is even better, seeing the characters come to life."

If the series itself ever succeeds in translating such enthusiasm to the small screen, and provides as much fun for the audience as it obviously does for the principals involved, *Superboy* may be flying high for years to come.

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* **The Addams Family**. Film. Orion Pictures.

The Adolescent Radioactive Black Belt Hamsters. Animated series. Rankin-Bass, producers.

The American. Film. Meltzer/Halpern, producers.

American Flagg! Film.

* **Annie** Separate film & stage musical sequels. Film to shoot April 1990. Lewis Gilbert, director. Musical reteams creators Charles Strouse, Tom Meehan & Martin Charnin & star Dorothy Loudon. Opens X-Mas in Washington, D.C., March on Broadway.

Ant-Man. Film

Archie. Film. Archie & Veronica. Targeted for summer 1991. Warner Bros. Script: Jeff Boam. Joel Schumacher, director. Archie: Corey Haim. Also NBC TV movie project. Exec producers: Tom Patchett, Andy Heyward.

Arzach. Film of Moebius hero. Kirk Thatcher, producer.

The Avengers. Film. Not comics; John Steel. Mel Gibson *may* star. Script: Sam Hamm.

* **Babar**. 52 new half-hour animated episodes now airing on HBO. Nelvana, producers.

* **Batman** Sequels planned. May film back-to-back. Cast, script, director TBA. First film due on video shortly.

Beetle Bailey. Film. Also animated TV special. Script: Hank Saroyan.

Beetlejuice. Animated Saturday a m. series on ABC. Nelvana & Warner Bros. (see article).

Blackhawk. Film

Blade. Film based on *Tomb of Dracula* character. Script: Lee Goldberg & William Rabkin.

Blondie. CBS animated special.

* **James Bond**. Animated series. *Adventures of James Bond Jr.*

* **Betty Boop**. Animated half-hour special. *Betty Boop's Hollywood Mystery*, to air on CBS in 1990. Film. Pierre Spengler, producer. Richard Fleischer may direct.

Brenda Starr, Reporter. Film starring Brooke Shields & Timothy Dalton. Release delayed due to New World sale.

Bugs Bunny. *Bugs Bunny & Tweety* airs on ABC Saturdays. New TV series teaming Steven Spielberg & Warner Bros. features young Warner characters, *Tiny Toon Adventures*. Debuts fall 1990.

* **Bullwinkle** *Boris & Natasha*, a live-action comedy, with Sally Kellerman & Dave Thomas. Script: Charles Fradin. Charles Martin-Smith, director. Due out February Video release of *Bullwinkle* begins late '89.

* **Captain America**. Film. Script: Stephen Tolkin. Albert Pyun, director. Captain America: Matt Salinger. (see item).

Cathy. Animated TV specials on CBS TV ads now running.

The Chameleon. New hero created by Stan Lee for TV. May appear in a Hulk TV movie.

Charlie Chan. Film.

* **Chip & Dale**. Animated series. *Rescue Rangers*, airs on Disney Channel & in syndication. Animated film due 1991.

Cracked. Superhero parody movie in development

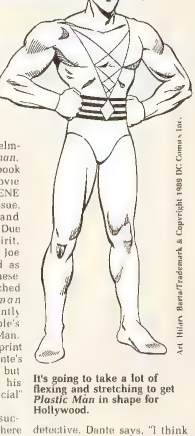
Deathlok. Film.

Delta Tenn. TV series to star Shannon Tweed.

* **Dick Tracy**. Film. Touchstone.

COMICS REPORTER

Will Joe Dante Flex Up "Plastic Man"?



Art Hilgert, Burns/Trademark & Copyright 1988 DC Comics Inc.

It's going to take a lot of flexing and stretching to get *Plastic Man* in shape for Hollywood.

Because of the overwhelming popularity of *Batman*, unprecedented in comic book history, many of those movie projects that COMICS SCENE has listed here, issue by issue, are being dusted off and hustled toward the screen. Due to his antic, sardonic spirit, evident in all his films, Joe Dante is often considered as a potential director for these projects—he was approached some years ago for *Batman* itself, in fact—most recently being a film of Jack Cole's classic character, Plastic Man. Noises have been made in print in various places about Dante's involvement in the project, but he asserts that right now, his involvement is still "unofficial" and "peripheral."

Because of *Batman*'s success, Dante is sure that "there will be a spate of producers running around trying to get hold of comic-book properties, because *Batman* is in, without paying attention to the fact that Batman has a number of things going for him that the majority of comic-book characters *don't*. There aren't that many who are as familiar as Batman, who has 50 years of good will, plus a TV series, plus a movie, plus big stars. *Batman* became an event rather than a movie."

As for filming Cole's ductile detective, Dante says, "I think it's *not* going to be the easiest thing to translate to the screen. It's largely forgotten today, so it doesn't have the cachet that the currently popular comic-book adaptations have. It's less well known than *Dick Tracy*, for instance, which is not very well known either, to the bulk of the moviegoing audience. It's still being published, but it's not the world's most popular comic strip. Most of the people who are going to see *Dick Tracy* are going to be about as unfamiliar with Dick Tracy as they are with Warren Beatty. He hasn't had a hit since *Heaven Can Wait*, and that's a long time ago [1978]; most of the kids going to movies today don't know who he is."

As to the special FX for *Plastic Man*, which would be very difficult, Dante says, "They've talked about a lot of different ways to do the effects, but it just may prove to be a prohibitive project. If you assume that the character is going to take on plastic dimensions with any degree of regularity, whether it's done with computer animation, or any number of ways it could be done, it's going to be *incredibly* expensive. And I think that to my mind, the problem that will ultimately make or break the picture is how much it's going to cost. Maybe they could do it in animation, but *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* was animation and that cost a fortune. I mean, this character is going to have to do a great deal of this stuff throughout the picture, or else it isn't going to be Plastic Man.

"At the moment, no attention has been paid to *how* it's going to be done, since nobody knows *what* is going to be done. I think it's a ways off. There has been a renewed kind of interest in it because of the comic-book movies, but I think we're talking a number of *years* before anyone sees *Plastic Man*. I'm afraid all this is so premature that I don't feel comfortable talking about it. I read the script once. I gave them my comments, and they've gone back and are going to have a new script written. That's where it lies. I don't have a perspective on it; I'm only *peripherally* involved—I didn't develop the script."

The script Dante read was "by Charlie Gale, which was set in period, which is apparently not the way everybody wants to do it now. And I imagine another writer will be hired and another script will be written. But in the meantime," says Joe Dante, "I'm doing *Gremlins II*."

—*Bill Warren*

Warren Beatty, director & star. Summer '90 release

DNAgents. Film. UA

Doc Savage. Film.

Dr. Strange. Film. Script: Bob Gale Looking for studio. Separate TV movie discussed.

* **Droopy**. Will co-star with son Dribble in new *Tom & Jerry Kids*, animated series from Hanna-Barbera for TBS

Fantastic Four. Film. Neue Constantin. Bernard Eichinger, producer.

* **The Far Side**. Film. Alan Rudolph, director. Paramount has passed on the film. Shopping for studio.

Felix the Cat. Animated film. Delayed by New World's sale.

* **The Fish Police**. Animated series.

* **The Flash**. Film. Guber-Peters.

The Flintstones. Film. Script: Steven de Souza. Joel Silver, producer.

Garfield. Saturday a.m. series, *Garfield & Friends*, on CBS. New cartoon special on primetime CBS: *Garfield's Thanksgiving*.

* **The Green Hornet**. Film. Taft Entertainment/Keith Barish. May be made at Universal.

Green Lantern. Film. Joel Silver, producer. Being written.

Gumby. Film.

He-Man. *New Adventures of He-Man*, a 65-episode series, due fall 1990. LBS Communications.

Honkytonk Sue. Film. Optioned by Goldie Hawn.

The Incredible Hulk. Next NBC TV movie airs this fall.

Iron Man. Character may be introduced in Hulk TV movie or solo *Iron Man* film.

* **The Jetsons**. Animated film. HB/Universal release now due June 1990.

Jonny Quest. Syndicated animated series. Live-action film. Fred Dekker, writer/director. Taft Entertainment/Keith Barish.

Judge Dredd. Film. Script: Tim Hunter & James Crumley. Charles Lippincott, producer.

Kaptain Keen & Ko. Planned animated series. Rankin-Bass.

Li'l Abner. Live-action TV series. Max & Michaeline Keller, producers. Dave Beil & Herbert Krosney, producers, plan TV specials, animated show & musical.

Little Nemo in Slumberland. Animated film. TMS Ent.

The Lone Ranger. Syndicated TV series planned. Also separate live-action film. John Landis, director. Universal.

* **Lone Wolf & Cub**. Film. Edward Pressman, producer. Script being written by Bill Wisher.

MacDoodle Street. Film. Columbia. Based on Mark Alan Stamaty's *Village Voice* strip.

MAD Magazine. CBS special. Hanna-Barbera.

Mai the Psychic Girl. Film. Optioned by writer/producer Larry Wilson. Co-producer: Walter Hill. With Carolco.

Mandrake. Film. Julien Temple, director, trying to re-activate. May star David Bowie.

* **Mickey Mouse**. Animated featurette "The Prince & the Pauper" in works.

Mr. Jigsaw. Ron Fortier-Gary Kato character optioned for animation by Rankin-Bass.

* **Mr. Magoo**. Film. Steven Tisch, producer. Also animated film. Would introduce niece, Megan Magoo.

* **Mr. X**. Film. Jim Cash & Jack Epps, producers.

My Secret Identity. Syndicated sitcom with Ultraman renewed.

Nancy. *Nancy The Movie*. She & Sluggo will be in their 30s. Peter Muller, producer.

* **Negative Man**. New superhero created by Bob Kane. Live-action series. Netvana.

Neil the Horse. Animation/live-action project.

Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD. Film. Stephen Herek, director. Script: Greg Pruss.

Joe Palooka. Musical.

The Phantom. Film. Bruce Sherlock, Peter Sjoquist, John Torv, Rodney Price, producers. Script: Ken Shadie. *Phantom* creator Lee Falk is consulting. Joel Schumacher *may* direct.

* **Plastic Man**. Film. Separate scripts by Charles Gale & Joe Lafia. Guber-Peters. Possible star: Pee-wee Herman. (see item).

* **The Punisher**. Film. Dolph Lundgren stars. Mark Goldblatt, director. Release delayed by New World's sale.

Radio Boy. Animated. Rankin-Bass.

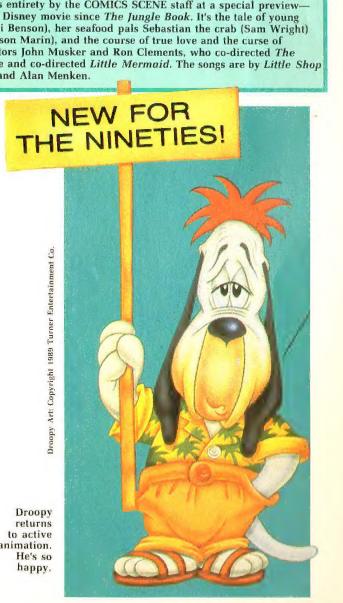
Reid Fleming, World's Toughest Milkman. Film. May star Jim Belushi. Script: creator David Boswell. Matt Weisman, Joseph Loeb II, producers.

* **Richie Rich**. Film. Fred Savage *may* star. Joel Silver, John Davis, producers. Warner Bros.

Little Mermaid Art: Copyright 1989 The Walt Disney Company

Song of "The Little Mermaid"

***The Little Mermaid*, Disney's newest animated opus, swims into theaters in November. This brilliant film—seen in its entirety by the COMICS SCENE staff at a special preview—may be the best all-animation Disney movie since *The Jungle Book*. It's the tale of young mermaid Ariel (voiced by Jodi Benson), her seafood pals Sebastian the crab (Sam Wright) and Flounder the flounder (Jason Marin), and the course of true love and the curse of awesome evil. Veteran animators John Musker and Ron Clements, who co-directed *The Great Mouse Detective*, wrote and co-directed *Little Mermaid*. The songs are by *Little Shop of Horrors*' Howard Ashman and Alan Menken.**



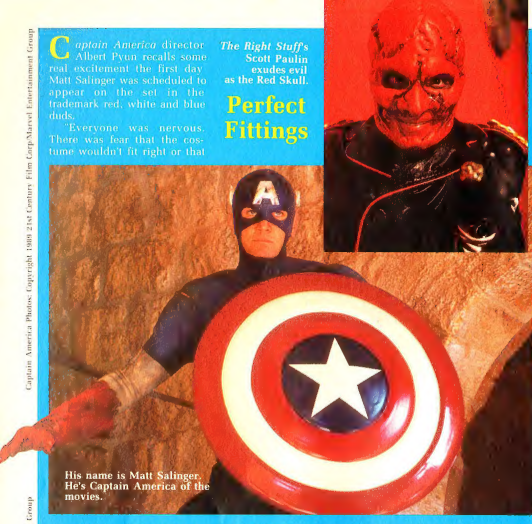
Droopy Art: Copyright 1989 Turner Entertainment Co.

Droopy returns to active animation. He's so happy.

Captain America Photos: Copyright 1989 21st Century Film Corp/Marvel Entertainment Group

The Right Stuff's Scott Paulin exudes evil as the Red Skull.

Perfect Fittings



His name is Matt Salinger. He's Captain America of the movies.

Captain America director Albert Pyun recalls some real excitement the first day Matt Salinger was scheduled to appear on the set in the trademark red, white and blue duds.

"Everyone was nervous. There was fear that the costume wouldn't fit right or that it would sag. Fortunately, it didn't sag. The fit was *perfect*."

According to Pyun, who recently wrapped principal photography on *Captain America*, the fit of the entire movie is also tailor made.

"The script by Stephen Tolkin was exceptional," says Pyun. "It is *very* faithful to the original comic book.

"This film shows the times we live in from a totally different perspective. We focus on a character who is from a time that was simpler and maybe even better and deposit him in our present and watch as Captain America takes in this future through a 1940s point-of-view."

Scott Paulin had an immediate reaction himself when his good buddy Pyun sent him what was then "a mystery script" and asked him if anything struck his fancy.

"I called him back and told him that clearly the *best* part in the film was the Red Skull," recalls the actor who plays the role under some terrific Greg Cannom makeup. "I felt it was a *much* better part than Captain America."

Paulin, who has appeared in *The Right Stuff* and *Cat People*, qualifies that assessment.

"Normally, comic-book villains are just a doorway for people to look at evil but we're never given a motivation for that evil. In the case of the Red Skull, we get to see *why* he became that evil presence.

"The Red Skull is this fascinating human being who has been galvanized into being what he is by being torn from his family as a child, suffering a horrible disfiguring disease and finally being converted into this demonic character who has almost completely forgotten his past. And it's only through the major conflict of this film that he finally finds his way back to his childhood. Now, *that's* fascinating stuff," says Paulin.

No release date for the *Captain America* movie has been announced yet, but it is rumored that the film will come out next summer to coincide with the 50th anniversary of *Captain America*'s first appearance in comics.

—*Marc Shapiro*

The Rocketeer. Film. Disney. Bill Dear, director. Script: Danny Bilson & Paul De Meo.

* **Roger Rabbit**. Short, "Roller-coaster Rabbit," next up. Other shorts planned: "Hare in My Soup", "Beach Blanket Bunny", "Cleaned & Impressed."

Sally Forth. Universal sitcom.

* **Secret Agent X-9**. Animated film.

Sgt. Preston of the Yukon. TV revival projected.

Sgt. Rock. Film. Rock: Bruce Willis. John McTiernan, director. Joel Silver, producer. Script: Steven de Souza & David Peoples. (see article).

* **The Shadow**. Film. Script: Howard Franklin. Martin Bregman, producer. Still "viable" though Universal has yet to give project much attention.

The She-Hulk. Will co-star in Hulk TV movie to air fall, NBC.

* **The Simpsons**. Animated series debuts on FBC. Spin-off from *Tracy Ullman Show* features Matt Groening's characters. Music: Danny Elfman.

* **Spider-Man**. Film. Seeking new script. Animated *Marvel Universe* segment continues.

Sub-Mariner. Film. Would shoot in North Carolina on *Abyss* soundstages.

* **Superboy**. Syndicated TV series renewed. Several cast changes. New Superboy: Gerard Christopher. Now filming at Universal Florida. (see article).

Superman. *Superman V* still possible.

Swamp Thing. Animated series.

* **Tales from the Crypt**. HBO Cable series. 19 second season episodes ordered.

* **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles**. Animated series in syndication. Live-action film due March '90. Steve Barron, director. Script: Bobby Herbeck & Todd W. Langen. Now filming.

* **Terry & the Pirates**. Film. Script: Jules Feiffer. Gene Kirkwood, John Hyde, producers. Stan Weston, exec producer. Sylvester Stallone *may* star. Ridley Scott *may* direct.

Thor. Animated series.

Time Beavers. Animated TV series. Kushner-Locke.

Tin-Tin. Film "on back burner" at Amblin.

Tom & Jerry. Film. New animated 13-episode TV series, *Tom & Jerry Kids* for TBS. Due fall 1990.

* **Trouble with Girls**. Film. 20th Century Fox. Script: Will Jacobs & Gerard Jones.

Unlimited Powers. CBS TV series pilot with super-team of DC heroes: Dr. Occult, Blok (from *LSH*), Green Arrow's daughter & a new Flash.

* **Vampirella**. Film. Frank Moomo/Centaur Films, producer.

V for Vendetta. Film. Warner.

WARP. Film. Script: Mark Victor & Michael Grais, producers.

* **Watchmen**. Film. Script: Sam Hamm. Terry Gilliam, director. Joel Silver, producer. Anton Furst, production designer. 20th Century Fox dropped project. Now, it's at Warners.

* **Whisper**. Film. To star Vanity. Apparently aborted due to Atlantic Releasing's financial troubles.

Wizard of Id. Film. Script: Steven de Souza, Dana Olsen. David & Jerry Zucker to direct.

Wolverine. Film. Would end with character joining X-Men.

* **Wonder Woman**. Syndicated TV series. To debut fall 1990. Warner Bros.

* **The X-Men**. Animated TV special/series pilot to air '89-90. This *may* be dead.

* **Zen, Intergalactic Ninja**. Film. Animated series. Surge Licensing. Scripts: Steven Stern. Mark Freedman, producer.

Zippyvision. Film. Script: Bill Griffith & Diane Noomin. Features Zippy the Pinhead.

* **Zorro**. Half-hour TV series. Zorro: Duncan Regehr. *Zorro—The Legend Continues*, co-produced by New World & France's Ellipse Programme & Canal Plus.

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